



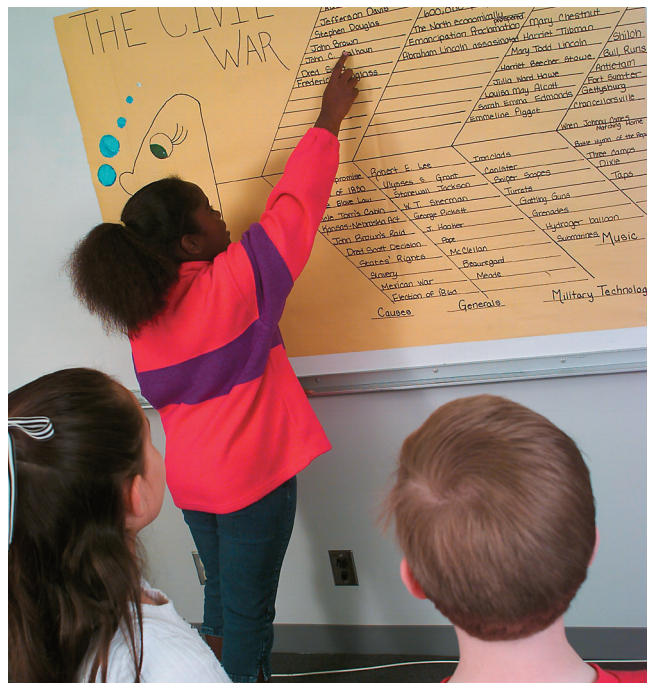
2003 Award Winner

Community Consolidated School District 15

Community Consolidated School District 15 (D15) is a kindergarten through eighth-grade public school system serving 12,390 students in all or part of seven municipalities in Palatine, Ill., a northwestern Chicago suburb. Its student population includes 37.5 percent minority students and 32.5 percent at the low-income level. Approximately 32 percent of D15's students come from non-English-speaking backgrounds; 72 different languages are spoken in the homes of its students. The school district has 14 kindergarten through sixth-grade schools, three junior high schools, and one alternative school. D15 operates the schools and its own transportation, maintenance, technology, and food services departments on a budget of \$146.9 million, with a workforce of 1,898 faculty and staff led by Superintendent Robert A. McKanna.

World-Class Learning

For D15, "good enough" is not good enough. The district's mission is to produce world-class learners who achieve exemplary levels of understanding in academics and who can compete with any student around the globe. D15 has laid out six key goals that must be accomplished to achieve its mission: providing their students with



Highlights

- In the 2002-03 school year, 84 percent of D15's second-grade students were reading at or above grade level, nearly 35 percentage points above the national average.
- From 2001-02 to 2002-03, eighth-grade students' "enthusiasm for learning," a key performance target, increased from 42 percent to 82 percent for reading, from 50 percent to 80 percent for math, and from 42 percent to 82 percent for science.
- Turnover rate for certified staff was 11.7 percent for 2002-03, compared to a national average of 20 percent.
- At a cost per percentage point of student performance on state learning standards tests of \$111.93, the district outperformed its three comparison districts, which ranged from \$118.57 to \$122.36.

21st-century skills, including accessing and understanding information, communication, comprehensive reading and understanding, problem-solving, and human relations skills; promoting world-class achievement; developing a connected learning community; ensuring a caring, safe, and orderly learning environment; maintaining a high-performing staff; and implementing an aligned and integrated management system.

To most effectively help all students in its diverse population achieve success, D15 has implemented a wide array of programs, including intensive reading intervention programs in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade; the Soar to Success program to accelerate reading growth for children in grades three through six; and Read 180, which combines technology with high-interest, age-appropriate print materials for children in junior high and targeted elementary schools. Programs for English Language Learners include bilingual or English-as-a-Second-Language classes and one-on-one or small group sessions.

As a result of these programs, many students are now meeting goals and improving at an increased rate. In the 2002-03 school year, results from a nationally normed test, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, showed that 84 percent of D15's second-grade students were reading at or above grade level. This is an improvement of approximately 10 percentage points since 2000-01, and is nearly 35 percentage points above the national average.

Reaching for the Stars

D15 uses some unusual means to inspire its earthbound students to learn about science and technology, including a school bus converted into a “space shuttle”; mission control simulations; a Discovery Learning Center for earth science and geology; and involvement in actual space shuttle missions. Since 1996, junior high students with learning disabilities have participated in a week-long competition at the NASA Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala., against non-disabled and gifted students from throughout the nation. During these seven years, the D15 students have finished first in at least one of four competition areas.

In fact, the overall rate at which D15 special education students are meeting goals and exiting the special education program has shown steady improvement since 1998-99, reaching approximately 14 percent in 2002-03—significantly higher than both national and state comparisons of about 5 percent. For English Language Learners, the exit rate has increased from 8 percent in 1998-99 to approximately 15 percent in 2002-03 exceeding state and local comparisons. In one group of kindergarten students, 18 percent required intervention services when entering school in 2001, but this number was reduced to 1 percent by the 2003-04 school year.

Special education students are showing improved performance, a trend seen throughout the district. D15 students have met or exceeded state standards of learning as assessed through the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, given in grades three, five, and eight for reading and math, and in grades four and seven for science and social studies. The district equaled or outperformed its comparison district at all levels and in all subjects from 1998-99 through 2001-02. In addition, in 2002-03, performance in third-grade math exceeded the 90 percent target and approached the state’s top 3 percent benchmark. In addition, grade five math, grade seven science, and grade three reading neared the 90 percent target.

D15 third- and eighth-grade gifted students participating in the 2001-02 World-Class Tests for math and problem solving had a higher pass percentage rate than those from the other countries participating: the United Kingdom, Australia, Hong Kong, and New Zealand.

Changing Their World

Critical to producing world-class learners is a dedicated, high-performing team of professionals, including teachers, administrators, and support staff. Highly qualified teachers, as defined in the Illinois criteria for meeting the federal “No Child Left Behind” legislation, teach 100 percent of the district’s classes, and the number of its teachers who have achieved National Board Certification has increased from two in 1994-95 to 48 in 2002-03, the second-highest number in the state.

Compared to a national average of 20 percent, turnover rate in the district for certified staff is low, 11.7 percent for 2002-03, and attrition for first-year teachers decreased significantly, from 19.5 percent in 1996-97 to 6.3 percent in

2002-03, well below the 20 percent level of a comparative local school district. Ninety-seven percent of staff say the environment in which they work is safe and secure. In addition, D15 motivates faculty and staff to develop and use their full potential by involving them in significant decisions about their work environment, including curriculum, instruction, and assessment issues.

Stakeholder-Driven Quality

Strategy development for D15 is led by the District Advisory Committee for Educational Excellence. This group, broadly configured from all key stakeholder segments and chaired by a community member, brings together the interests of employees, students, parents, suppliers, partners, and the community. The committee uses a nine-phase strategic planning process to translate stakeholder expectations, environmental scanning information, and organizational performance requirements into key goals and performance expectations. Through its Strategic Vision 2005, D15 converts strategies into action plans. From this guiding document containing the district’s mission, core values, key goals, and student performance targets, a One-Page Plan Scorecard is developed for each department. Objectives from the scorecards are communicated to building leaders who use this information to align their own plans using a Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle. The strategy is further cascaded through the organization to teams and classrooms using the same PDSA process, ensuring comprehensiveness and continuity.

To facilitate fact-based management, D15 has constructed a system of leading and lagging success measures aligned to its six key goals. Data are analyzed, and the results are distributed to faculty and staff to enable them to make informed decisions and develop innovations in education and support services.

The district has developed innovative means of assessing performance important to key stakeholders. For example, the district’s “market performance” is determined by calculating the dollar cost per percentage point of performance on state learning standards tests. This allows a value creation comparison with other districts in the state. At \$111.93, D15 outperformed three comparison districts, which ranged from \$118.57 to \$122.36. In addition, D15 maintained a per pupil expenditure rate that is at or above the level of both comparison districts and the state average from 1995-96 to 2001-02. Over the same period, no tax referendum has been sought to increase this primary source of funding.

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