



Garden City Public Schools

Department of Curriculum Services
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Michelle Cline, Superintendent

Dr. Susan Collins, Director

Letter of Support

“Learning-Focused” Professional Development

May 25, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

I highly recommend “Learning-Focused” as a premium professional development partnership that is research based for any school program or school district. This comprehensive program has everything teachers and administrators seek in K-12 staff in-service, with a variety of training packages to complement existing educational settings.

Garden City Public Schools has contracted with “Learning-Focused” to provide the powerful “Connecting Strategies Alliance Package” for our teachers and administrators. This is the first time that our entire instructional staff K-12 is focused on the same strategies for improving student achievement in all content areas. It has truly been an amazing year for our district staff! They work collaboratively to plan and implement interventions to raise all students’ performance, with particular emphasis on struggling learners.

Garden City Public Schools is a Title I and At-Risk district dedicated to RtI (Response to Intervention) as a model of intervention. We have been cited by the State Department of Education as exceeding the state average of students certified as special education. Our aim has been to strengthen our Tier I intervention for struggling learners and to decrease our identification rate of special education students.

We have achieved dramatic success in this area of concern. In 2008, 23 % of our total student population was identified as special education. At the end of 2009 we had decreased our percentage of students identified as special needs to 13 %. We attribute this significant gain to our “Learning-Focused” teacher professional development and the application of the new instructional strategies acquired by staff.

We are pleased with academic improvement of district students in all content areas on our State assessment programs: MEAP (Michigan Proficiency Assessment

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Profile) and MME (Michigan Merit Exam), which includes the ACT. Last year our district achieved AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) at every building, for the first time. We are celebrating our success and planning to accelerate this upward trend by contracting for continued professional development. We are selecting the “Vocabulary Development” and “Catching Kids Up with Acceleration” packages for upcoming in-services.

We are completing our contract “Connecting Strategies Alliance Package” which has included:

- Transforming Standards into Learning
- Connecting Exemplary Practices in Acquisition Lessons
- Connecting Extended Thinking
- Planning Units for Learning

During our professional development teachers have learned improved research based instructional strategies, shared exemplary lessons, identified power standards and posted lessons in the web based tool box component of the program. Visual signs of the transformation in our district are displayed in every building. Teachers post the “Essential Learning Question” for every lesson or unit and incorporate graphic organizers to increase learning and retention in every classroom.

“Learning-Focused” has been a gift to our district. Their highly trained, effective and motivational workshop facilitators have been extremely impressive. The professional development materials (books, flip charts, DVD's, Graphic Organizers, etc.) have been the tie-in to teacher training that sustains momentum. The presentations have been well received by staff. Teachers are learning to become “coaches” and support the instructional efforts of their colleagues.

“Learning-Focused” coordinators are accommodating and eager to please. They have been flexible in tailoring their programming to our district needs. They are easy to deal with and deliver everything they promise and more!

I would be pleased to discuss “Learning-Focused”: Solutions that Work with any interested individuals. We welcome site visits, as well. Please contact me at 1-734-762-6353 for further input.

Educationally yours,

Dr. Susan Collins
 Director of Curriculum & Instruction
 Garden City Public Schools