



**SCHOOL/DISTRICT NAME:** Running Brook Elementary, Howard County Public Schools (Maryland)

**CASE STUDY TITLE:** Literacy-Based Student Engagement

**TEACHER IMPACT GOALS STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS #1**

Identifying teacher leaders to build the solutions necessary to change and strengthen the profession and drive transformation in schools, districts, and states.

**TEACHER IMPACT GOALS STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS #2**

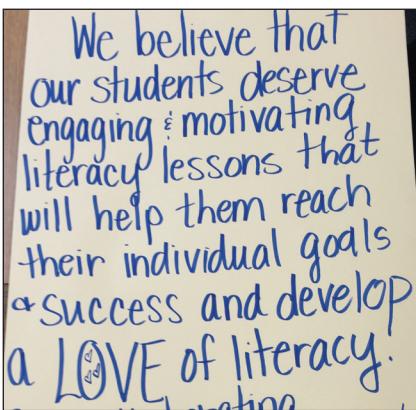
Asking teacher leaders to embrace and lead necessary reform such as changes in existing structures and mindsets.



**OVERVIEW**

Summarize your story in 7–10 sentences. Describe the problem statement and goal of your project. Use your application abstract as a guide and tie in your two chosen TIG strategic goals and area of focus as stated in your application.

Teachers are currently creating an environment that tends to be more teacher-centered. We need to change the mindset of our teachers to develop lessons that are student-centered. Teachers have been told that student-centered learning is our current expectation, but they do not always have the resources or tools to use in developing more engaging, student-centered lessons. Our goal is to assist teacher leaders in changing their existing structures and mindsets in order to increase student engagement. In reaching this goal, we will assist teachers in shifting from adopting the primary role of information giver to that of facilitator, guide, and learner. Students will become critical thinkers and deepen their understanding of concepts and texts. They will develop habits that will help them become independent readers and writers who are able to delve deeper into texts and interact with them. Students will take more ownership of their learning, which lead to increased academic achievement.



## THE CHALLENGE

### What was the challenge you were facing? What goals were you trying to achieve?

Teachers were creating a learning environment that was more teacher-centered. Teachers were told that student-centered learning is the expectation, but they did not have the resources or tools to use in developing more engaging, student-centered lessons.

We were trying to assist teacher leaders in changing their existing structures and mindsets in order to increase student engagement through student-centered activities. We wanted students to become critical thinkers and develop habits that will help them become independent readers and writers who are able to delve deeper into texts and interact with them.

### Summarize three points of frustration you faced.

Not having an opportunity to collaborate with fellow teachers in other grade levels was a point of frustration for us. Another frustration was lack of funds to purchase resources that we felt would help to increase student engagement. Lastly, not having an opportunity to observe fellow teachers using engagement strategies caused frustration as well.

### What strategies were you attempting to use before to solve this problem?

Teachers were all trying different strategies but never had the opportunity to formally share with one another. Developing this cohort of teachers has provided us with the opportunity to hear what is going on in other classrooms and grade levels.

### What was the big "aha" moment when you decided you needed to try something new?

We knew that we had great teachers in our building and, in passing, we would hear about some of these great things teachers were doing. We knew that if we had the funds, we could form a group to share these ideas and learn new strategies to engage our students.

### What was the top reason you selected this grant?

The grant was brought to our attention by Jennifer Olsen and Jennifer Hlavka, who are the facilitators of Howard County Public School's Teacher Development and Support Office. They offered a Leaders of Professional Learning cohort, which we attended to strengthen our understanding of how to run a PLC in our school. This grant ties in directly with that cohort. It provides teachers with the tools and strategies to be leaders in their buildings and bring about positive change.

### IMAGES/DESIGN ELEMENTS/ BUILD AN IMPACT PROFILE

At what level did this project have the most impact? School

School/district profile

- Columbia, Maryland
- Rural
- District/school enrollment: 100 staff members
- Impact: Grades 1–5
- School demographics:
  - Ethnicity:
    - American Indian/Alaskan 0%
    - Asian 6.1%
    - Black/African American 51.2%
    - Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 0.8%
    - Hispanic/Latino 13.3%
    - White 20.0% Two or more races 8.6%
  - Specific student populations
    - Students Receiving Special Services 2014–15:
      - Free/Reduced Lunch 49.7%
      - Ltd. English Proficient 6.4%
      - Special Education 13.0%
      - Title I >95.0%

## THE RESPONSE

### How has the Teacher Impact Grant work helped you achieve your goals or solve a problem?

One of our goals was to assist students in developing habits that will help them become independent readers and writers who are able to delve deeper into texts and interact with them. We also wanted students will take more ownership of their learning. This grant has helped us implement new and exciting engagement strategies across our school and county that we would not have been able to implement without the additional funds.

### How has it impacted your school/district/teachers/principals/students?

It impacted our school because the teachers shared what they learned and they shared resources they were given. This allowed for all students to be equally engaged. We also had the opportunity to bring a group of teachers to our state literacy conference, SoMirac. The teachers were able to bring their learning back to Running Brook and share their learning with the staff. It impacted the district when we presented many of the strategies at a districtwide professional development session.

### How has it helped you to overcome the challenges you had before?

Many of the engagement strategies require the purchasing of manipulatives, books, and technology, which we were unable to do prior to this grant.

### QUOTES FROM TEACHERS:

- "This PLC has inspired me to try new strategies and techniques more often to engage all of my students."
- "I have become more reflective and plan more engaging lessons because of everything I learned in this PLC."
- "I have learned that the possibilities are endless when it comes to getting the students excited and engaged in reading."
- "Now that I have implemented new engagement strategies, I have noticed an increase in stamina. I think this is due to the excitement about getting to read the new books this grant has allowed us to purchase. Students are also motivated to read because they have opportunities to talk with classmates who have read the same book. Students are now having meaningful conversations about books!!"

## THE RESULTS

### What specific metrics can you share about the impact it had (having data for a graph/chart/figure or two is greatly preferred)?

Our data point that we are using to measure the impact will be available at the end of July or beginning of August.

### What is the single biggest reason you would recommend applying for a Teacher Impact Grant in the future?

The single biggest reason I would recommend applying for a TIG in the future is the impact that it can have on large number of students. With this grant, a teacher's impact on students' learning can be multiplied. Using the grant money to help and mentor other teachers in my school, or in my district, means that my knowledge impacts the students in their classes. Students throughout my school are impacted by the professional development workshops I attend and the learning I take back and share with my colleagues. They are impacted by the experiences and resources I was able to provide them.

## CALL TO ACTION

### What is your biggest takeaway from administering this grant?

We have amazing teachers at Running Brook Elementary School who always have the best ideas. Unfortunately, we do not always have the money to fund these innovative ideas. With the help of the grant, we were able to implement new engagement strategies. We realized that we didn't need to pay for someone to come to our school to "train" us or tell us what to do; the best training came from the teachers within our building. The teachers just needed the time to collaborate, share ideas, then use the funds to purchase the necessary resources.



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PLC brainstorms ways to increase student engagement with new classroom library books. Thank you @ASCD @TeachtoLead @hcpses\_rbes #ASCDTIG



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A day of learning with a great group of ladies @hcpses\_rbes @hcsselementa @ShariH77 #SoMirac2017



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