

Smaller Learning Communities Grant Application

NEW YORK'S TECH VALLEY SLC21 CONSORTIUM PROJECT

Project Abstract

The Albany, Schenectady, Schoharie, Saratoga Board of Cooperative Educational Services (Capital Region BOCES) in partnership with the Rensselaer, Columbia, Greene Board of Cooperative Educational Services (Questar III BOCES) and the Greater Capital Region Teacher Center (GCRTC), and significant business and higher education partners, is most pleased to submit a Smaller Learning Communities grant as part of a comprehensive regional strategy to prepare all students to succeed in postsecondary and education and careers without need for remediation. This grant effort also responds to a mounting regional need in upstate New York for a well educated and skilled workforce to support the dramatic expansion of its high technology business and industry sector, and the recognition by high schools here that, far too often, they are simply not meeting the needs of all students or the regional economy. The consortium has requested \$6.25 million in federal grant funds.

The Tech Valley SLC21 Consortium Project focuses on three separate and very different large high schools that suffer the impact of size: Graduation rates that range from 51% to 87%; poor student achievement in ELA and math in one urban high school with significant disparity in proficiency among disaggregated groups such as African American (48%) and White (72%), and mounting disciplinary and student absentee issues. Concern has prompted the SLC21 Consortium Project to move forward with a plan to build small learning communities in the following schools: **Albany High School – 2, 633** students (City School District of Albany, NY); **Colonie Central High School – 1,855** students (South Colonie Central School District, Albany, NY), and **Mohonasen High School – 1,113** students (Mohonasen Central School District, Schenectady, NY). This application also meets **Competitive Preference Priority #2** in which one of the three schools – Albany High School – is persistently low achieving and qualifies for Title I funds. The schools participating in this facilitated conversion process will incorporate the innovative SLC practices of the region's model small school, Tech Valley High School (TVHS). These SLCs will feature 21st Century Skills, standards based project-based learning and higher education and business partnerships that connect students to post-secondary and career opportunities in New York's burgeoning Tech Valley region. Dedicated and extended time for common planning and collaboration will anchor each smaller learning community.

This unique strategic plan features a three-tiered approach to phased implementation of locally responsive SLCs. The first tier represents the wide range of professional development, instruction and curriculum and administrative supports provided by the BOCES, TVHS and the GCRTC to facilitate school level activities. The second tier consists of the three initial participating school level SLC implementation teams who will put into practice these new instructional designs over a five year period, and the third tier is the broad regional dissemination network that results from the prototypes created at the three High Schools in conjunction with TVHS and other partners.

SLC21 Project goals are centered on **Student Achievement, Professional Development, Post Secondary Preparation; Management and Leadership, and Community Involvement**. They promise by the year 2015 that all schools will drive college readiness to 80%; increase growth in teacher capacity and leadership; deliver focused academic and career oriented guidance and offer postsecondary credit or industry certification programs; continue fiscal and program management on time and on budget by BOCES, and, through the Tech Valley SLC21 Coordinating Council, continue to maintain strong communication and responsiveness to all stakeholders involved in the SLC21 project.