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 To: Mary Beth Schafer, Nontraditional Education Programs Specialist,
 Minnesota Department of Education
 From: Lynn Grundtner, Curriculum Coordinator
 Northeast Metro Intermediate School District 916

Building Capacity to Create Work Experiences and Competitive Employment Opportunities Grant Report

Qualitative and Quantitative Information on the Implementation of Strategies Thus Far

The timeline for the grant awarded to Northeast Metro 916 and Intermediate District 287 runs from January 2010 through January 2011. Instruction is scheduled to begin in September 2010. Qualitative and quantitative information about implementation will be available beginning in October, 2010.

On May 12, 2010, the Building Capacity Grant team including teachers and supervisors from both districts and the project coordinator will get together for a kick-off and in-service. There will be workshop activities about strategies and dialogue about integration of the strategies into the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) course which both districts have decided to adopt. Previously it had been planned that at the Northeast Metro 916 site, graphic design would be piloted. Upon investigation and reflection, it became apparent that the Microsoft Office course could include elements of graphic design and provide instruction in skills required in a wider variety of employment situations, so both sites will offer instruction in Microsoft Office.

Strategies that will begin to be studied with an eye toward integration at the May 12th workshop address reading. The strategies will include: activating prior knowledge; clarifying, questioning, summarizing, and a process for learning vocabulary terms. The team will be learning about the strategies, practicing them, and discussing how to apply the strategies in the Microsoft Office course.

Short Description for Each Strategy

Activating prior knowledge means to think about what you already know about a topic. For example, before beginning Word Chapter 1, in *Microsoft Office 2007: Introductory Concepts and Techniques, Windows Vista Edition* (Shelly, Cashman, & Vermaat, 2008) I would think about entering text in a document because that is something I already know how to do.

Clarifying means to identify confusing ideas, portions of text, and/or words that are difficult to pronounce or understand. Then reread the confusing portions looking for

meaning in the context, examine the word for familiar parts or roots, insert a more familiar term to see if it makes sense, and/or check preceding information for clues to the meaning.

Questioning involves generating questions that have answers which can be found in the text. For example; “How do I change the font size of selected text?” is a question that can be answered using Word Chapter 1, in *Microsoft Office 2007*.

Summarizing involves identifying the main idea(s) in a section of text and restating the information in one’s own words.

Building Academic Vocabulary (Marzano and Pickering, 2005), describes a six-step research based process for teaching new terms. Students taking the Microsoft Office course will encounter subject specific terms they will need to learn in order to acquire the skills to effectively use Windows Vista. Teachers will work to integrate these strategies:

- Restate a description or explanation of the term
- Construct a graphic representation of the term
- Engage in activities to add ton knowledge about the term
- Discuss the term
- Participate in games to play with the terms

Specific information about mathematics strategies that will be integrated into the Microsoft Office course will be available after the workshop/planning session scheduled for June 15, 2010.

Where We Are in Our Timeline

The timeline for the grant awarded to Northeast Metro 916 and Intermediate District 287 runs from January 2010 through January 2011. Late in January 2010, 916 and 287 received approval to access funds awarded. According to the timeline, planning and preparation will take place during spring semester and summer of 2010. Instruction is scheduled to begin in September 2010.

The grant writers, supervisors, and project coordinator for the team attended a meeting to review the project. Team members from 916 and 287 were introduced. An overall picture of the project was presented, and goals and outcomes were discussed. A target date by which all team members would be identified was set.

Currently all team members are on board including reading, math and EBD instructors, work experience coordinators and a project coordinator. The project coordinator has met with team members and visited a site where a Microsoft Office class was underway. Research and

consultation about materials for the course to be offered in both districts has led to selection of materials.

Goals Currently Working On; Status Update in Achieving Goals

Goal #1: By December 30, 2011, create and pilot an instructional program that integrates mathematics and reading into the career area of computer applications.

Goal #2: Assist students in obtaining a job requiring computer application skills.

The 916/287 team is in the process of creating the instructional program with integrated academics as described earlier in this report.

Number of Students Currently Involved in the Activities, Number of Staff, Locations of Activities

Since we are currently involved in the planning stages of the project there are no students involved at this point. There are five staff members from Intermediate District 287 and five staff members from Northeast Metro 916 involved in planning and preparation.

An initial meeting took place at Metro ECSU in Roseville, Minnesota. A site visit occurred at the South Education Center in Richfield, Minnesota (287). Several meetings have been held at Capitol View Center in Little Canada, Minnesota (916). Numerous emails and phone calls have kept team members in contact with one another about plans for moving the Building Capacity project forward. Workshops are scheduled for May 12th and for June 15th.

“Highlights” That Have Been a Part of This Activity

Highlights already apparent even before embarking on implementation of instruction with students are those aha! moments for staff. When staff members have the opportunity to connect with one another over ideas about improving learning for kids, creativity is multiplied. The grant project offers the chance for teachers to exchange information and ideas across specialties and even across districts. We know that the more teachers know, the better we can serve students.

An example is when one teacher shared how students need extra work on computer terms, another teacher offered a proven process for vocabulary learning. Another example is when a work experience coordinator was brainstorming a list of different entry level jobs where some type of Microsoft Office skills are needed, other team members added to the list. We have already made connections between instruction, academics, and work more explicit in our own minds so that we will be better able to help students make those connections. We are grateful for the activities supported by the Building Capacity project and we look forward to further preparation this spring and summer, and implementation in the fall.