

CASDA's Mission in Action: Powerful Partnerships with the University at Albany's School of Education

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By Nancy Andress

Motivated by the mission as catalysts, conveners, community developers and capacity builders, CASDA faculty have collaborated with researchers and faculty at the University at Albany's School of Education on two successful programs designed to share research and encourage sharing evidence-based practices. The **NYKids Project** in the School of Education and the Teacher Leadership Quality Partnership Grant Program represent eight years of direct work with school teams using research and best practices for school teams to ensure continuous school improvement.

The NYKids Project, led by Dr. Kristen Wilcox, principal investigator of research studies and assistant professor in the Educational Theory and Practice in the Educational Theory and Practice Department of the School of Education. Dr. Wilcox developed the COMPASS tools and oversees or leads all COMPASS training. Betsey Schuhle, formerly of CASDA, serves as project director. CASDA faculty members Nancy Andress and Susan Tangorre are facilitators for NYKids team training. Over 40 school teams have been trained in using COMPASS tools and planning process. The website, www.albany.edu/nykids, provides free tools including interactive displays of school performance data, studies on high schools, middle schools and elementary schools and best practice frameworks.

The goals of the **COMPASS** (Compare, Assess priorities, Select levers for improvement, Set SMART goals and develop action plans) is to engage school teams, led by the principal, in reflective, collaborative inquiry that looks holistically at how to impact student performance. The institutes at CASDA or school based-workshops are usually done in two days and guide school teams to use web-based tools and studies from higher and average-performing schools to identify best practices in curriculum, instruction and critical school issues. Workshops allow teams time and support for developing schoolwide goals and the freedom to innovate to meet the goal. Once schools develop action plans, guidance for implementation and follow-up is provided by CASDA and University staff. Schools participating in School Reviews have found COMPASS to provide support for developing SCEP or LAP plans. Asked for feedback after one institute a teacher wrote, "The institute allowed us to think through and discuss where we are now and where we can go. The time with colleagues and time to focus on specific pieces of our school was invaluable." Current NYKids projects with school teams are in Fort Plain Junior Senior High School and Harry Hoag Elementary in Fort Plain Central School District and Karigon Elementary in Shenendehowa Central School District. ...

For more information on the NYKids COMPASS project, summer institutes and workshops contact bschuhle@albany.edu.

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