

From Dr. David Welling, Superintendent, Derry Area School District:

Derry Area School District is beating the odds and bringing success to their students. This district of about 2,000 students is located in the rust belt of Western Pennsylvania. Over fifty percent of its students qualify for free and reduced lunches, the median family income is about \$38,000.00, \$10,000.00 below the Pennsylvania state average, and only twenty-one percent of the adult population has a B.S. degree or higher.

Many factors have an impact on student outcomes including, family income, educational levels and values, as well as other social and cultural influences. A school district has little control over these outside factors. However, it can make a difference in the quality of education that a child receives as well as the environment in which learning takes place. Every student deserves our best every day. We believe in their worth and our capacity to make a difference in their lives. Education is the pathway to a better future for our students.

At Derry Area, we believe the greatest impact we can have on improving student success is through quality instruction. Highly effective teachers produce successful students! A well-planned program of staff development with a focus on literacy has transformed how we engage students in the learning process. Through our partnership with The Penn Literacy Network of The University of Pennsylvania, Pre-K partners, elementary and secondary teachers and school administrators have embraced the concepts and strategies presented in our PLN classes.

Veteran teachers have stated that PLN instructors and course content have transformed their instructional design and delivery, increased student engagement, and renewed their enthusiasm for teaching. The information learned in our professional development has provided them with practical, research-based strategies that can be implemented immediately. PLN has given us one voice throughout the district, across all schools, grade levels and content areas. This common language facilitates deep conversations between teachers and administrators on how to best serve our students. In summary, PLN has transformed our district and deepened the skill set of our students to be successful in an ever-changing world.

- Overachiever School District – Pittsburgh Business Times – 2014
- 2013-2014 District State Test Results: All schools made progress
- 2013-2014 Pennsylvania Keystone Award Recipient of Early Childhood Partnership
- 2014-2015 Pennsylvania Keystone Award Finalist in Literacy Plan Implementation
- 2014 Nationally Ranked High School U.S. News