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**To learn more about NYS Teacher Centers, please visit:**  
[www.nysteachercenters.org](http://www.nysteachercenters.org)



January 2018

# Far West Teacher Center Network

## **NYS Teacher Centers – Professional Learning For Teachers, By Teachers**

New York's Teacher Resource and Computer Training Centers were established by the New York State Legislature in 1984 under [Education Law 316](#). The initial appropriation of \$3.5 million established 44 Teacher Centers throughout the State. The Legislature continued to approve Teacher Center funding through 2010 when the overall level of appropriations increased to \$40 million, supporting 133 Teacher Centers, 7 Regional Networks and 5 Statewide Committees. **Since 2010 Teacher Center funding has been cut by 50%**, currently operating at a \$20 million statewide budget. To continue providing the services that our teachers need to ensure student success...

**We need your support to increase our funding to the 2010 level of \$40m.**

**WHY?** Teacher Centers have led the **INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY** into curriculum and instruction in New York State. We have **COLLABORATIONS** with teachers, districts, schools, institutions of higher education, and other education stakeholders, including several business agreements, to provide tens of thousands of professional development opportunities every year, many aligned with and/or directly supporting local school improvement goals.

Teacher Centers have also been, and continue to be, primary supporters and trainers of the development and implementation of New York's Regents Reform Agenda and its alignment with the NYS Professional Development Standards. We have been recognized by NYSED as approved providers of CTLE programs. We support **TEACHER LEADERSHIP** through **NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION**. We provide assistance to teachers of **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS** to ensure equal education for ALL students. In addition, Teacher Centers partner with **HIGHER EDUCATION** to bridge the gap between P-20 and ensure new teachers are well prepared for the classroom and students are well prepared for college and careers.

**To carry on our great work, we NEED your help! Please advocate for education and professional learning by continuing to fund NYS Teacher Centers and increase our funding to \$40 million.**

**REMEMBER, EVERY VOICE COUNTS! MAKE YOURS HEARD.**

### **A MESSAGE ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER:**

These newsletters are intended to keep our constituents and supporters aware of the great work currently going on in the various Teacher Centers across the WNY region. They are available in both paper and electronic copy. Please note that in the electronic copy you can learn more about each Center by clicking on the Center's name. To view these newsletters electronically and learn more about the Far West Teacher Center Network, please go to:

<http://fwteachercenter.wixsite.com/fwtc>

## REGIONAL HAPPENINGS

### FAR WEST NETWORK

The [Far West Teacher Center Network](#) is comprised of 16 regional centers serving educators in Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Cattaraugus, Allegany and Chautauqua Counties. Our network serves over 20,000 educators on a limited combined grant from the state of \$1,400,000. From 2010-2013 our program funding was severely cut by an astronomical amount of 64%. Thanks to our legislators and the support of our constituents, our funding was increased in 2016 but we are still operating at 50% of 2010 levels.

- 2009-10 Total funding=\$2,800,000
- 2010-11 Total funding=\$0
- 2011-12 Total funding=\$1,400,000
- 2012-13 Total funding=\$730,000
- 2013-14 Total funding=\$1,022,000
- 2014-15 Total funding=\$1,022,000
- 2015-16 Total funding=\$1,022,000
- 2016-17 Total funding=\$1,400,000

The following pages highlight some of the great work our local Teacher Centers provide throughout the Western NY area which focuses on improving teacher practice and student learning. Each Center collects relevant data on the impact of these programs to ensure the money granted us is used in an effective and meaningful manner with the ultimate goal of improving student learning. Please contact the local Center for more information on any of the programs.

### FAR WEST NETWORK



Poverty is a reality for many individuals and families. But unless you have experienced poverty, it is difficult to truly understand.

The Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) bridges that gap from misconception to understanding. CAPS is an interactive immersion experience that sensitizes participants to the realities of poverty.

The simulation involves participants who take on the roles of members of 26 families, all facing a variety of challenging, economic circumstances. It is the families' task to provide food, shelter, and other basic necessities by accessing various community resources during the course of 1 "month". After the experience, individuals discuss what they have learned with their peers. Through the simulation and the rich discussion that follows, we believe participants are more inclined and better prepared to identify areas of change that can directly impact the effects of poverty on their students.

The Far West Network facilitates these simulations to Districts across WNY. In 2016-17 we facilitated 10 poverty simulations and in 2017-18 we are scheduled to facilitate 20. Our hope is that through this program, teachers will develop the empathy and strategies to best support their students and prepare them for a meaningful and successful life following school.

### ALDEN TEACHER CENTER

As the 2017-2018 school year began, an interest in restorative justice sparked among the administration, faculty and staff members at Alden Central Schools. This was clearly evident at the very first Teachers' Center meeting in September.

While reading the book [Better Than Carrots or Sticks](#), by Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, our collegial circles focused on restorative justice during the fall semester. Within the educational setting, emphasis is on building deep relationships between teacher-student as well as student-student. Strategies encourage relationship building and mutual understanding (positive interpersonal skills) over finger pointing and retribution.

Throughout the District, the ultimate goal is to develop a successful plan to implement these techniques.



### BUFFALO TEACHER CENTER

The Buffalo Teacher Resource Center is working closely with the IT and Science Departments to support teachers by providing in-depth training on using 1:1 devices for teaching; and discovering ways to create meaningful and engaging lessons that are aligned with the Next-Gen Science Standards. There are approximately 21,000 1:1 devices being distributed across grades K-3 and center-based devices for Pre-K to grade 2. Our technology coaches are bridging the gap from initial rudimentary training to the critical understanding of the power of technology for our students. They are offering several online courses. Science instructors who have studied and embraced the Next Gen Science Standards have created a course specifically to allow teachers to become comfortable with, explore and create lessons reflecting the new standards. Our teachers have asked for these sessions and our mission is to support teachers in whatever way they need to be more successful.



### CATTARAUGUS-ALLEGANY



On 11/14/17, social studies teachers from surrounding school districts met to continue their work from a Spring conference around the changes in the global studies standards and assessment. The full-day training was facilitated by Teacher of the Year, Greg Ahlquist.

Held at Olean City School District, part of the day was used by teachers to work on vertically aligning their social studies curriculum, while the other part focused on the enduring issues which make up part 3 of the new NYS assessment.

*Incorporating Mindfulness in our Lives* was the topic of another workshop where 50 participants learned the background of Mindfulness, methods to incorporate it into their lives and classrooms, and the research surrounding how Mindfulness can improve student achievement. Dr. Rosa D'Abate from Williamsville CSD also discussed the process her district has been going through in getting Mindfulness into the classrooms for their students.

More pictures and resources can be found at [www.CATeacherCenter.org](http://www.CATeacherCenter.org)



## ERIE-CATT TEACHER CENTER

Erie-Catt Teacher Center (ECTC) began the school year with a September two-day Next Generation Science (NGSS) Symposium with Science Experts: Lisa Brosnick, incoming President of the NYS Science Association, Mike Jabot from SUNY @ Fredonia, and Judi Dzikowski, Rosen Publishing. Friday night involved an overview of NGSS – what it looks like, what it means for students and why NYS is supporting this program. Saturday applied what was learned with hands on activities, available resources and how educators can involve Science in their disciplines. What we learned is that NGSS: Replaces the scientific method with phenomena problem solving; prompts scientific learning through phenomena investigation; focuses on questioning by both teachers and students; and assists teachers through currently available resources. In reflecting on this learning experience, ECTC is continuing the support for NGSS by querying teachers on their needs (we have discovered the fear that with the NGSS changes instructors are concerned about becoming experts in specific science areas); offering additional programming on questioning, phenomena, and available resources; purchasing resources like Breakout-Boxes, Hummingbirds, and Paper-Circuits that encourage a 3D technique to instruction.



## KENMORE STAFF DEV CENTER

The Kenmore Staff Development Center continues to offer workshops which provide staff and our community with opportunities to further their knowledge of learning and instruction. We focus our workshop offerings around three central themes:

### Teachers Helping Teachers

District staff members share their expertise to support one another as they collaborate to enrich instruction for their students.

### Professional Learning on Current Trends and Best Practices

We offer three semesters of workshops which provide guidance on how best to collaborate and cooperatively plan meaningful instruction.

### Making Learning a Positive Experience

Students who feel accepted and encouraged are more willing to move forward as learners. Our role is made better through the support and guidance we practice with one another and pass on to our students.

Come visit us at our new location:

155 Delaware Road, Kenmore, NY 14217



## LACKAWANNA TEACHER CENTER

The Lackawanna Teacher Center is providing support to all ENL, classroom, special education and special area teachers of ENL students by providing building-specific workshops. The workshops will target the skills and needs that teachers have identified as most important through a needs assessment given to all teachers. One focus will be on creating visuals to help ENL students with comprehension of new materials such as a read aloud, new math vocabulary or a new concept in science since research shows that ENL students have a much better chance of understanding new information if there are visuals involved. Participants will bring books or lessons that they teach and will walk away with materials they can use the next day to help their ENL students! Support from ENL teachers will also be provided for individual teachers as needs arise.



## NIAGARA FALLS TEACHER CENTER

The NFTRC continues to promote **Poverty Simulations** throughout the district. As a follow up with Abate Elementary School we are facilitating a school wide book study with the book "Understanding Poverty in the Classroom" by Beth Lindsay Templeton. Also, some faculty and staff are participating in the CTACNY webinars on trauma informed instructional strategies. With the assistance of Principal Cynthia Jones, the entire faculty is engaged in how to meet the educational needs of students who live in poverty.



## ORLEANS-NIAGARA TC

The ONTC began a 2-year technology case study, SAMRI Tech Club, in August 2017. The study involves 8 pairs of K-12 teachers from 5 districts in our consortium. Each pair received 3 or 4 different technology devices to use with their students over the course of the study. Devices included Ozobots, Cubelets, Makey-Makeys, Hummingbird kits and iPads. The teachers first received training on the SAMR methodology of teaching which is based on the premise of moving along a continuum of technology immersion from basic substitution to full redefinition of teaching and learning. They also received training on all the tech devices. Teachers are expected to use the technology, track usage, collect data on changes in student learning due to the technology and share information with the other members of the Tech Club. So far this year, teachers have documented many improvements in student learning such as increased motivation, engagement, and improved assessment scores.

In addition to the tech study, our Center also began a program using Breakout kits which are based on the "Escape Room" concept. Teachers may borrow kits to create challenging activities for their students that teach critical thinking, team building, and essential problem solving skills. Similar to the technology tools, teachers have indicated a significant increase in engagement and motivation with their students while using the kits. Teachers are required to complete an analysis of the kit and game and how they impacted student learning and behaviors following the activity. Our Center will be hosting a Breakout Competition for students in grades 6-12 in April 2018.



## PIONEER TEACHER CENTER

This August, the Pioneer Teacher Center offered an in-service workshop, "Autism Spectrum Disorders". The course provided participants with an understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders including the diagnosis, characteristics, and potential impacts on learning and the classroom environment. After implementation of new learning, participants indicated that having a better understanding of sensory integration difficulties helped them to make modifications to their classroom environments, which has in turn helped reduce challenging behavior. Teachers also indicated that it was helpful to be able to recognize characteristics of ASD and to be able to understand possible triggers that may upset the students and proactively make modifications. For a final project, participants created and used social stories with students, as well as new strategies such as the use of visual aids, use of a timer and sensory integration techniques. Participants felt that the course was rigorous, but provided many benefits to their teacher practice and student achievement.



## SOUTHTOWN TEACHERS' CENTER

Growth Mindset is based on the work of psychologist Carol Dweck, and is an exciting foundation for how we learn. The basic premises for Dweck's forty years of research are that we can increase our intelligence, develop resiliency and stamina as a learner, and embrace our mistakes as a way to continue learning.

After 2 very successful 15 hour courses, we decided that this topic would make an excellent Action Research project. Our Instructor is working in 3 third grade classrooms to:

- show the teachers how students can change their mindset
- have students understand that they can not only change their mindset, but also apply a growth mindset to future learning
- inform parents on ways that they can assist their children in forming a growth mindset
- get the teachers so engaged that they want to learn more

At this time, the work in one classroom has been completed, with a pretest and posttest having been given. We are very excited with the work being done in these classrooms and look forward to analyzing the results.



## SWEET HOME TEACHER CENTER



The Sweet Home Teacher Center has partnered with the Far West Regional Teacher Center Network to sponsor two Poverty Simulations during district wide staff development days this school year.

The simulation provides a great starting point for our professionals to begin conversations at their buildings and grade levels about poverty. Faculty members have indicated that the simulation was beneficial and has provided an entry point to become more aware of the environment that their students are surrounded in. Additionally, our goal as a Center is to provide book studies that have a focus on strategies to help engage children in their schools.

## TEACHER CENTER OF CHEEKTOWAGA

Following the guidelines of a few Teacher Center Directors in Central NY, the Teacher Center of Cheektowaga is attempting to bring back the spirit of the mini-grant--**Action Research Projects**...designed to provide motivation for teachers to work with colleagues to discuss, research, and implement practices that will aid in solving problems in the classroom. Our Center is bringing this model to the schools in our consortium in the hopes of sparking not only research in the classroom but the opportunity to share ideas and successes with colleagues. One outstanding Action Research Project will involve a staff member learning phonetic teaching methods designed for students with dyslexia and apply them in the classroom with students that display symptoms of dyslexia. This study will use knowledge gained from three sources: a dyslexia manual, student workbooks, and an online course. The desired outcome would be for students to increase their reading abilities, confidence, and guided reading levels. At the end of the project period, a report will be made to the Policy Board and the research results will be shared with all consortium members.

## TONAWANDA-GRAND ISLAND TC

The Tonawanda Grand Island Teacher Center continues to focus on the growing needs of the diverse students in the classrooms. In collaboration with the State University College @ Buffalo Dr. Larry Maheady & Dr. Tim Zgliczynski support the initiative. This professional development opportunity combines study groups and action research that will be analyzed by the college. Kagan structures stress positive interpersonal peer relationships, equality, self-esteem, and achievement. Focus study groups will address these target populations: low achieving students, ENL students, Students with challenging behavior, Gifted and Talented Students and Students with Disabilities. Kagan structures can be used to create equal opportunities for all students in the classroom. Teachers will be trained on the use of the Kagan classroom "structures" and implement 3-5 structures during the school year. Using Edmodo, teachers post monthly reports and respond to their peers practice. Each teacher will record a Kagan Structure taught in their classroom and post to a dedicated Youtube site. Students in participating classes will complete a Likert scale to reflect on their perception of the value of these structures on their achievement.



## WEST SENECA TC

The West Seneca Teachers' Center is offering a **collegial circle** revolving around the book written by veteran educator and brain expert Eric Jensen, ***Teaching with Poverty in Mind: What Being Poor Does to Kids' Brains and What Schools Can Do About It.*** This course will focus on the daily challenges faced by disadvantaged children and provide an inspiring, practical guide for educators to help enrich the minds and lives of all of our students. In mid-January we will continue our look at teaching with poverty in mind and will host a Poverty Simulation. The Center will continue to provide these types of informative workshops to help teachers improve their professional practice and support the West Seneca School's initiative of meeting the needs of all of our students.



## WESTERN NEW YORK TC

One of the main focuses for the WNY Teacher Center this year has been to encourage and provide opportunities for educators to join Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) and Focus Groups. Participation is excellent at these sessions, during which teachers of specific subject areas and grade levels, therapists, and social-workers learn from and provide support for each other. In addition to expanding these PLC's for specific content, developmental, and role-oriented groups, the WNY Teacher Center Policy board recommends offering PLC's after specific workshops and online courses to help participants integrate their new learning in their classrooms.



## WILLIAMSVILLE CENTER

The Williamsville Education Center is running a MakerSpace Case study to support teachers as they create an environment in their libraries, schools and classrooms which promotes problem solving, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration. K-12 teachers meet monthly to support one another in their journey and learn new ideas to help incorporate STEM-related activities into classroom projects. Teachers are able to borrow equipment from the Teacher Center such as Cubelets, Ozobots, Hummingbird Kits, and Makey Makeys to add the technology piece to student products which will bring the products to life with movement, sound, and light. Basic coding becomes an integral part of making these things come to life. In the current Makerspace Challenge teachers in the study and middle school students are creating 3-D model gardens for victims of the hurricane in Puerto Rico. They are using their math skills to optimize the area given their perimeter restrictions and their research skills to learn about the plants indigenous to Puerto Rico. Then they will add security such as Ozobot robots which will patrol the perimeter, a moving farm vehicle with lights made with Legos and Cubelets, lights and sound features using the Makey-Makey, and an animated scarecrow using the Hummingbird Kits.

## **FAR WEST SPOTLIGHT**

The Far West Teacher Center Network is committed to excellence as well as providing quality professional development for our educators. The Action Plan for the 2017-2018 school year includes:

- **The Integration of Technology** into the curriculum and instruction in our classrooms K-12. This includes a wide variety of classes such as: Coding, Robotics, On-line Learning, Microsoft Office, Schoology, just to mention a few.
- **Poverty Simulation** which provides the necessary training concerning families who endure extreme poverty in our communities. It is an interactive immersion experience that sensitizes the community about Americans who must daily make the choice between too little time and money to meet their basic needs.
- **National Board Certification** courses help candidates as they work through the components for certification; and hopefully, elicit the interest of teachers who might consider making a commitment to the certification process.

Along with the **Next Generation Standards**, our Network will continue to support eclectic programs that enhance and elevate the teaching profession.

