

2018 Essex County Learning Community

New Profit's [Reimagine Learning Fund](#), in partnership with the [Center for Collaborative Education](#), is developing a learning community of five Essex County school districts in which district leaders will commit to collaborative research, inquiry, and professional development focused on improving policies, programs, and practices to effectively serve students with diverse learning assets and needs, especially those with learning disabilities. Districts will be selected through an open Request for Proposal process, and each district will receive \$25,000 to participate in the Essex County Learning Community (ECLC). In turn, districts will be expected to fully commit to participation in the activities of the learning community. The ECLC will consist of the following elements:

Expert Interdisciplinary Faculty

Guiding the ECLC will be a faculty of nationally-known experts in such specific areas as learning disabilities, learning and attention issues, social and emotional development, cultural competence, and trauma. The faculty will work as a design team, creating syllabi for the role-alike groups and a set of desired outcomes, and serving as presenters and coaches as appropriate. As needed, we will also invite other members of the Reimagine Learning Network both to share their expertise with participants and to establish relationships for potential future partnerships with school districts.

District Lead Teams

Each district will form a Lead Team, consisting of the superintendent or assistant superintendent of curriculum (or equivalent), director of special education, school principal, special education teachers (2), and mainstream/inclusion teachers (2). These Lead Teams will be expected to meet monthly upon network launch. Each meeting will be 2-3 hours and will include presentations and discussions with faculty, sharing of effective practices, engaging in consultancies about dilemmas in implementing effective policies and practices district-wide to better serve students with disabilities, and team planning.

Cross-District Topical Groups for Teachers

Mainstream and general education teachers from each district team will meet monthly to engage in collaborative inquiry cycles and professional development. The topical groups should be expected to engage in three types of discourse:

- Consultancies and inquiry cycles about classroom, school, and district dilemmas;
- Shared professional development; and
- Identification and changing of district and school systems and policies

This cross-district learning is intended to open up a new space for teachers to be vulnerable in front of their peers. The teachers are in close enough geographical proximity to continue to be resources to one another as they grow their skill base, even beyond the period of formal engagement in the community.

Two-Day Summer 2018 Institute for Up to 50 Teachers/Staff

The Summer Institute will be focused on further inquiry into identified problems of practice that have emerged through topical groups, enabling teachers to continue to delve more deeply into specific areas of effectively teaching students with diverse learning needs and assets that have surfaced. Teachers within the topical groups will provide recommendations to help shape the institute agenda.

District Plans

Based on Lead Team discussions and topical group recommendations, each district Lead Team will create an action plan to improve services to students with diverse learning needs. Lead Teams will meet together in November 2018 to present individual plans to one another using a structured protocol, gain feedback, and determine revisions to be made.

Showcase of Learning

In December, each team will have an opportunity to present their plans to their peers from other districts at a final celebration, and teachers will have an opportunity to present model lessons. Other stakeholders, including parents, philanthropists, policymakers, and business leaders may also be invited to attend the Showcase of Learning.