

TDMS raises achievement in Philadelphia

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY'S Talent Development Middle Schools (TDMS) schoolwide reform model is improving student achievement in 11 Philadelphia public middle schools, despite obstacles such as poverty and high teacher turnover.

The improvements are demonstrated by scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) standardized test. Almost every Philadelphia school that has used the Talent Development Middle School model for three or more years has experienced what the state defines as "educationally significant gains" of 50 points or more in at least one tested subject area. As a group, the Talent Development Middle Schools have improved test scores significantly more than control schools. They have also bested, by an even wider margin, the citywide average improvement for all middle schools.

Eighth-graders in seven Talent Development Middle Schools implementing the model for three to six years raised their schools' combined math and verbal PSSA scale scores by 55 to 215 points.

Students in four other Talent Development Middle Schools that have used the model for just one year increased their combined scores between 10 and 130 points.

Only 5 of Philadelphia's 26 high-poverty, high-minority schools had eighth-graders who earned a combined PSSA average of 2200 or higher in 2001; four of those schools were Talent Development Middle Schools. In 2002, 8 of the 14 high-poverty, high-minority

schools to break 2200 were Talent Development Middle Schools.

"Schools using the Talent Development Middle School model have substantially and consistently improved their achievement levels," said Robert Balfanz, a research scientist at the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR) at Johns Hopkins University. "Their gains have been twice as great in comparison to overall school district gains, and 20% greater than matched sets of control

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schools. It should also be noted that the longer schools have been implementing the model, the greater their achievement gains."

Four of the 11 schools, however, are

no longer using the Talent Development model. During a system-wide reorganization last year, Clemente, Shoemaker, and Tilden middle schools were turned over to private educational organizations, which chose to introduce their own reforms, while Roosevelt was assigned to a set of schools restructured by the school district.

Designed specifically to engage middle schoolers with a challenging yet nurturing learning environment, Talent Development Middle Schools is a whole-school reform model developed by researchers, educators, and experienced curriculum writers at CRESPAR. Philadelphia's Central East Middle School was the nation's first Talent Development Middle School. In Philadelphia, Johns Hopkins collaborators are the Philadelphia Education Fund and the School District of Philadelphia.

The model combines instructional, curricular, organizational and professional development reforms that are based on extensive research into what really works in middle schools. Students participate in hands-on classroom activities in every subject area. The model features small-group learning, extended class periods for core subjects, and extra-help electives in math and reading. Teachers participate in monthly after-school or Saturday sessions and receive weekly in-classroom feedback from curriculum coaches.

The Talent Development model is being used in 18 schools in 6 states: New Jersey, Louisiana, Washington State, Michigan, and Minnesota, as well as Pennsylvania. G

<i>School</i>	<i>Yrs in pgm</i>	<i>PSSA baseline</i>	<i>2001-02 avg</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Yrs in pgm</i>	<i>2001 PSSA</i>	<i>2002 PSSA</i>	<i>Change</i>
Central East	6	2040	2255	+215	Tilden	1	2140	2270	+130
Cooke	5	2090	2260	+170	Lewis	1	2170	2220	+50
Beeber	5	2150	2250	+100	Vare	1	2170	2210	+40
Clemente	4	2045	2135	+90	Pierce	1	2190	2200	+10
Shoemaker	4	2005	2125	+120	Average		2167	2225	+58
Roosevelt	3	2135	2190	+55	District Average			2280	2310
Mansion	3	2090	2185	+95				+30	
Average	4	2079	2200	+121					
Control Schools		2066	2166	+100					
District Average			2232	22					
				95					
				+					
				63					