Taft IT Program Overview

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  - Preparatory Academy serves grades 9 and 10
  - Senior Institute serves grades 11 and 12
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  – Study 17 areas of information technology
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• Preparatory Academy students
  – Study 17 areas of information technology
  – Gain opportunity to make informed decisions about area of focus in Senior Institute

• Senior Institute students specialize in many areas of technology including:
  – Interactive Media, including Final Cut Pro
  – Cisco Networking
  – Information Services and Support, including A+ Certification
Demographics

- 99% African-American, 1% Other
- 60% Free and Reduced Lunch
- 60% Male; 40% Female
- 35% Students with Disabilities
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- Entrance Requirements
  - None
  - Taft IT is one of the few comprehensive IT schools in the country that does not screen students for high math/science scores.
Transformational Change

• In 2000, Robert A. Taft High School chose to become the first restructured high school in Cincinnati Public Schools.
• At that time, the school was perhaps the lowest performing high school in Ohio with a graduation rate of 18%.
• Community involvement produced an Information Technology focus amidst other program areas across the city including Paideia, Montessori, and University Schools.
• Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School came into existence.
• An instrumental partnership with Cincinnati Bell was established.
Key Strategies

- There were several strategies that were put into place during restructuring:
  - Teacher responsibility for student achievement through pure teaming
  - Teacher-led research for best practices models
  - School-based professional development
  - Teacher-leaders at Taft but also in CPS as a whole
  - Team structure modeling with high-performing teams
Professional Development

• Professional development works best at Taft Technology when it is delivered by in-house experts.
• PD activities have included:
  – Differentiated Instruction
  – Writing Across the Curriculum
  – Four-column Method
  – Subject-area Specialization
  – Learning Teams
  – Book Studies
Book Studies

• Book studies have been an integral part in capacity building for teachers.
• Book studies have included:
  – Subjects Matter (Daniels)
  – How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms (Tomlinson)
  – What’s Worth Fighting For (Fullan)
  – Good to Great (Collins)
  – Community: The Structure of Belonging (Block)
Challenges/Solutions

• Successful team modeling produced an unexpected backlash from other teams.
• Most people wanted the high-performing team split up across other teams.
• The high-performing team’s results included:
  – Better student attendance
  – Lower disciplinary issues
  – Higher standardized test achievement
• To counter staff negativity, the following occurred:
  – Data was shared that showed that students were not hand-picked.
  – Data was shared that showed that students were not just those involved in athletics.
  – 8th grade test scores were shared showing that scores for the high performing team’s students were similar to other teams.
Challenges/Solutions

• Parent involvement was also a challenge in the early years of restructuring. Open House events usually averaged 20 parents.
• Parent conferences were not working since students were being hammered and badgered by teachers. Therefore, conferences were not productive.
• With the help of Cincinnati Bell, parents were encouraged to come to Open House events through raffles and giveaways.
• Now, no raffles are needed; parent involvement is at an all-time high.
• Parent conferences turned into student-led conferences, where students took the lead, showcasing their own progress through portfolios and sample work.
Challenges/Solutions

• As a result of the resentment shown towards the one high-performing team, a “can I really do it?” attitude seemed to be prevalent.
• To counteract this attitude, a team-based school model was put into effect. This gave teams more autonomy.
• Teachers were asked to teach with doors open to change patterns of isolation.
• High expectations were presented as the norm for all.
• Instead of intimidation and disrespect, everyone began to believe that “I can do it” is the best attitude to have.
• FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION became our motto.
Failure is not an option

At Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School, we believe that FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION. Students are educated in a caring, nurturing environment and are given many opportunities to succeed.

As you visit our site, please click the school name at the top of each page to return home.

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KEY STRATEGIES
Key Strategies

• Cincinnati Bell Partnership
  – Tutoring
  – Incentives

• Safety Net Program
  – 5\textsuperscript{th} Quarter
  – Intervention
  – Individual Learning Plans

• Teacher Empowerment
  – Professional Development
  – Technology
Cincinnati Bell Partnership

- Cincinnati Bell, the largest local telecommunications provider in Cincinnati, partnered with Taft IT High School from day one.
- Jack Cassidy, CEO, and Anthony G. Smith, Principal, entered into a long-term partnership agreement sealed with only a handshake.
- This partnership has involved the following areas:
  - Building infrastructure
  - Equipment
  - Incentive Programs
  - Co-Curricular Fundraiser
  - Cincinnati Bell Tutoring Program
Cincinnati Bell Tutoring Program

- Assistant Principal in charge of Curriculum and Instruction reviews strand data with tutors from Cincinnati Bell
  - OGT standards are used
  - Disaggregated data is used to see patterns in problem areas
  - Tutors’ strengths are considered when matching subject areas
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- Tutoring occurs during instructional day
  - Ensures students are present and that tutors’ time is maximized.
  - Students required to make up work for classes missed
  - Cincinnati Bell provides breakfast for Cincinnati Bell employees and tutors
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  - Students required to make up work for classes missed
  - Cincinnati Bell provides breakfast for Cincinnati Bell employees and tutors
- OGT Prep Classes are provided for students who have not passed selected parts of the test
  - Classes are mandatory
  - Teachers use disaggregated data patterns to ensure students are receiving tutoring in the correct areas
Cincinnati Bell Incentive Program

- Cincinnati Bell Incentive Program
  - For students with 3.3 GPA or higher
  - Qualifying Preparatory Academy students
    - $30 Best Buy gift card each quarter
  - Qualifying Senior Institute students
    - Laptop, wireless phone, and ZoomTown

- Cincinnati Bell Scholarship Program
  - Each year, ten $5,000 renewable scholarships are given to deserving students.
  - To date, over $500,000 has been awarded as part of this very worthwhile program.
Safety Net Program
5th Quarter

• Comprehensive safety net opportunities have increased Taft IT High School’s student graduation rate
  – Students notified as soon as a deficiency occurs
  – Students given multiple opportunities to address deficiencies
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• Students have opportunities to repair credit deficiencies
  – Before and after school
  – On Saturdays
  – During the summer
Safety Net Program

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  – During the summer
• Some students:
  – meet with teachers starting at 8:10 a.m.
  – meet with teachers from 3:10 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
  – meet with teachers on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Safety Net Program (continued)

- Tracking documents allow students to focus only on standards with performance deficiencies in any given course.
Safety Net Program (continued)

• Tracking documents allow students to focus only on standards with performance deficiencies in any given course

• Students receive Individual Learning Plans that clearly identify where interventions are needed
  – Students receive a this plan following the first semester of the school year
  – This plan is updated at the end of the school year
Safety Net Program (continued)

- The term “5th Quarter” was used to eliminate the negative connotation associated with summer school.
- Students realize that 5th Quarter is a continuation of learning.
- Students have really gravitated to the new terminology of 5th Quarter instead of summer school.
Teacher Empowerment Professional Development

- Teachers serve as leaders in the school and throughout the district as a whole.
- Lesson plan reviews and classroom walkthroughs help teachers to refine teaching techniques.
- Teachers present data and strategies for sustainability through staff meetings and book studies.
Teacher Empowerment Technology

- Technology has helped teachers become experts.
- Enhancements include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Blackboard
  - Dashboard
  - Smartboards
  - Final Cut Pro (Interactive Media—Apple)
  - Cisco Networking (Networking—PC)
  - New School (projection system/DVD/Cable in classroom in each and every classroom)
Upward to Excellence

• We are very pleased with our progress and look forward to achieving the State of Ohio’s highest rating of EXCELLENT.
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• Our commitment is to move our students onward and upward.
• The entire Taft IT High School Community remains dedicated to achieving excellence for all students.