

Department of Education winners, 2000

Four schools and three districts were named 2000 winners of the U.S. Dept. of Education's Model Professional Development Awards.

This annual program honors schools and districts that boast exemplary professional development programs and have demonstrated improvement in student learning.

In this issue of the *JSD*, we offer a brief look at two of these programs. We will continue to feature one or two winners in each issue this year.

THE 2000 WINNERS:

- Concord Road Elementary School, Ardsley, N.Y.
Rochelle B. Cohen, principal
- Jacob Hiatt Magnet School, Worcester, Mass.
Anthony Caputo, principal
- Mountain Brook City Schools, Mountain Brook, Ala.
Jackie Simons, director of instruction
- New England Center for Children Inc., Southboro, Mass.
Myrna E. Libby, program director
- Pebble Hills Elementary School, El Paso, Texas
Dona Descamps, principal
- School Board of Broward County, Fla.
Margarita Sasse, director, Human Resource Development
- Wichita Public Schools (USD 259), Wichita, Kan.
Ranelle Long, director, School Improvement/Staff Development

Information about each of these schools is available through the NSDC web site at www.nsdc.org/usdoe.htm.

► PEBBLE HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, EL PASO, TEXAS

Pebble Hills, a traditional school with average student achievement, embarked on a major reform initiative of instructional and professional development practices in 1995 with dramatic results. The school staff examined its instructional practices, student achievement data, and current research on effective professional development. The staff established a professional development model that includes research-based practices, mentoring, model lessons, coaching, and problem solving around specific problems of the practice of teaching.

A reorganized school day has given teachers and staff 60 minutes at the end of the day for professional learning. This allows staff to work together collaboratively on an ongoing basis.

During the reorganization, teachers also agreed to adopt standardized "best practices" within and across grade levels and to work together to identify those best practices. Before the reorganization, teachers were not familiar with the research in this area, nor did they know about the underlying theory for those practices.

Pebble Hills has two instructional specialists in literacy who work with teachers to develop model lessons that are observed by other teachers. The school designed a portable classroom that consists of two rooms separated by a one-way mirror and sound proofed. Teachers are periodically scheduled to teach a lesson with one of their reading groups while their colleagues watch on the other side of the glass, out of the view and hearing of the students. One of the instructional specialists facilitates a dialogue with the observing teachers as the lesson is going on and then leads a problem-solving discussion with the model teacher and the observing teachers.

PEBBLE HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, EL PASO, TEXAS

Enrollment: 1,073

Racial/ethnic mix:

Hispanic: 78%

White: 18%

Black: 4%

Asian: .8%

Limited English proficient: 25%

Languages spoken: Spanish

Free/reduced lunch: 78%

Special education: 15%

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The instructional specialists also teach model lessons themselves — and parent volunteers take over the regular classrooms to free teachers to meet together for these lessons.

Teachers also participate in weekly 45-minute instructional meetings each Tuesday while students attend health and physical education classes. The campus also has a "professional development center" where weekly meetings are held and professional journals, books, and videos are available for staff.

The most apparent evidence of the success of the professional development model is the continual climb over the past four years of grades 3-6 student achievement as assessed by the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. The campus also has developed a database of student assessments in literacy for its kindergarten through 3rd grade students beginning with the 1998-99 school year. This charts the progress in literacy across time for K-3 students to assess program effectiveness and individual student progress in the primary grades. ■