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Five Rhode Island Public Schools Selected for Innovative Reading Initiative

Teaching Studio at The Learning Community expands reach to Woonsocket, Smithfield with professional development to impact 3,000 students

PROVIDENCE, RI -- The Teaching Studio, the professional development consulting group of The Learning Community, today announced new public school partners in a ground-breaking initiative to improve reading achievement. In its first year the initiative will engage up to 170 educators who reach more than 3,000 Rhode Island public school students.

The Teaching Studio's innovative approach, which achieved national recognition for its work in Central Falls, is led by consulting teachers at The Learning Community, a high poverty, high achieving public charter school. Supported by a \$1.8 million investment from the Rhode Island Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation, the partner schools, announced today at a celebration hosted by The Rhode Island Foundation, are:

- Globe Park Elementary School, Woonsocket
- Harris Elementary School, Woonsocket
- Leo Savoie Elementary School, Woonsocket
- Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School, Woonsocket
- and Old County Road School, Smithfield

These schools will receive training and materials over three years to advance achievement in reading, including:

- Grade-level professional development sessions to support implementation of units of study
- Units of study in reading that are aligned to new national Common Core standards
- Quarterly consultant support in analyzing reading assessment data
- Training for reading specialists on reading safety net support services
- An on-line resource center of units, lesson plans, teacher tools, video clips and discussion forums
- Support from a master scheduler to help align the school day to maximize instructional time
- \$20,000 to each school in materials to support the work

In addition to the five schools above, representatives from six other schools will have access to professional development and training materials to support an aligned, district-wide strategy in both communities: Bernon Heights, Citizens Memorial and Kevin K. Coleman Elementary Schools in Woonsocket and Anna McCabe, Raymond LaPerche, and William Windsor Elementary Schools in Smithfield.

In its first year this work will engage up to 150 teachers and 23 reading specialists across 11 schools in grades K-5. These teachers reach more than 3000 students.

“The Rhode Island Foundation is pleased to see the nationally-recognized work of The Teaching Studio benefit a broader group of schools,” said Denise Jenkins grant programs officer for education at The Rhode Island Foundation. “This is a great example of a charter school doing what charter schools were envisioned to do: serve as laboratories for best practices to share with the greater public sector.”

Christine Alves, Director of The Teaching Studio and architect of its work in Central Falls, told the crowd, “It is critical that we put the voices of teachers in the center of school improvement efforts. I am thrilled to gather more teachers to work collaboratively on the latest teaching techniques and using data to inform instruction. Central to The Learning Community’s mission is sharing best practices with other public schools.”

Speaking to a crowd of invited guests including teams of teachers from every partner school, Dr. Vanna Donoyan, Superintendent of the Woonsocket Public Schools said, “We were honored to be selected as a partner in this effort. And we are thrilled that the work will have an impact across our district, supporting reading achievement for every student. Working together we can move further, faster.”

Robert O’Brien, Superintendent of the Smithfield Public Schools, said, “We applied for this grant because we were excited to get support in strengthening our reading workshop while aligning to the Common Core standards. This opportunity to collaborate with other schools and teachers will benefit the students in Smithfield. This award is a great acknowledgement of the incredible teachers working hard in our classrooms every day. We can’t wait to begin.”

Partner schools were invited to apply for the initiative through an invitation issued to public schools throughout the state in the Spring of 2012. Selection was based on an application, site visits, conversations with faculty and administrators, and survey feedback from teachers. The Teaching Studio team was extremely inspired by the talent it saw in the selected schools. Trainings and facilitated planning sessions will begin in February 2013. Schools have made an initial three year commitment to the initiative, but the project may have a longer time frame.

To learn more visit <http://teachingstudio.thelearningcommunity.com>

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About The Teaching Studio at The Learning Community

The Teaching Studio is the professional development consulting group of The Learning Community, one of Rhode Island’s highest performing high poverty schools. The Learning Community, a K-8 public school, was founded in 2004 as an excellent school and as a center for professional practice to share what works. This center, The Teaching Studio, provides grade level, customized support for teachers, schools and districts to improve instruction and make measurable gains in student achievement. The Teaching Studio’s work with the Central Falls public schools has received national attention. Now, with generous support from The Rhode Island Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation, The Teaching Studio is poised to partner with more local schools to improve reading. For more: <http://teachingstudio.thelearningcommunity.com>

About The Rhode Island Foundation

The Rhode Island Foundation is a philanthropic and community leader dedicated to meeting the needs of the people of Rhode Island. Founded in 1916, the Foundation is one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the United States, and is the largest and most comprehensive funder of nonprofit organizations in Rhode Island. In 2012, the Foundation made grants of \$30.4 million to organizations addressing the state’s most pressing issues and needs of diverse communities. Since 2010, public education has been one of the Foundation’s signature priority areas, supported through grants, advocacy, partnerships, and leadership. The Foundation has been a proud supporter of The Learning Community since its founding in 2004. For more: <http://www.rifoundation.org>