Indiana Department of Education School Improvement Summit
Learning Sciences International Technical Assistance Partner Profile
April 23-24, 2019

**Background**

**Organization name:** Learning Sciences International (LSI, visit us at [www.learningsciences.com](http://www.learningsciences.com))

**Organization address:**
- **Corporate Services Division**: 175 Cornell Rd, Ste 18, Blairsville, PA 15717
- **Applied Research Center**: 1400 Centrepark Blvd., West Palm Beach, FL 33401

**Organization contact person, contact email, and phone number:**

- Merewyn E. Lyons, Ed.D.
  - Associate Director, LSI Applied Research Center
  - llyons@learningsciences.com
  - 717.415.2100 extension 168

**Organization mission:** LSI’s mission is to empower schools and districts through transformative core instruction and leadership practices, resulting in rapid gains in student learning.

**Approach**

**Describe your organization’s school improvement services:** LSI believes underperforming schools can be transformed through rigorous, standards-based core instruction led by principals and teachers and supported by LSI’s unique *Schools for Rigor®* and *Metric-Based Solutions*. These solutions uncover root causes impacting achievement gaps and overlay LSI’s proven metric instruments to establish baseline conditions and monitor growth of teaching and learning.

- **Schools for Rigor** transformation is evidenced by the student-led academic teams in the classroom. Schools evolve into high-performing, scalable models of rigorous instruction and student engagement.
- Robust coaching and real diagnostics in our *Metric-Based Solutions* offer tailored treatments flexibly designed to meet district timelines and budgets. These solutions focus on improving designated metrics and growing leadership capacity.

**Describe how your organization differentiates its services to meet the unique needs of districts and schools:** LSI is about teacher improvement, not one-size-fits-all programs. Our partnerships begin with a school needs assessment to uncover specific root causes impacting achievement gaps. Through this analysis, LSI can recommend which solution meets the school’s unique need and best equip them to close achievement gaps. Solutions will drive results through the structures of professional learning for teachers, and coaching and supports for instructional coaches, administrators, and leadership teams:

- **Schools for Rigor Standard Implementation:** This model focuses on systems development to support standards-based, student-centered teaching and learning with 30-day action plans and metrics that drive professional development and coaching. LSI faculty includes a part time faculty coach, part time leadership coach, and LSI experts as needed to ensure the school’s success.
- **Schools for Rigor for Schools in Turnaround:** For schools seeking to exit Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) status, this model involves two phases of implementation. The *Conditions Phase* develops strong, supportive expectations, systems, and processes to foster rigorous teaching and learning in every classroom. The *Transformation of Core Instruction Phase* then shifts to student-centered, standards-based learning to prepare all students for the 21st century. LSI faculty includes a full-time faculty coach and full-time leadership coach shared among four schools. Additional LSI experts augment services as needed.
- **Metric-Based Solutions:** LSI’s metric-based solutions for district and school leaders embeds high leverage indicators to help schools ensure they are working on the correct root causes and systems to move the school’s student performance. Coupled with monthly metrics, data helps pinpoint if the school is making progress towards goals and moving forward as planned. LSI assigns expert consultants matched to the school’s unique needs to provide training, leadership consultation, professional development, diagnostic walkthroughs and calibration.
Describe the attributes of your organization’s ideal partner district and/or school: Partnerships vary based on the level of support the school elects or requires. Nevertheless, all successful partnerships require mutual commitment between LSI and the district to:

- Fully engage in supporting the principal, and in problem solving to ensure success
- Remove competing initiatives or programs from schools that dilute focus on core instruction
- Maintain a positive, growth mindset
- Participate in collegial, collaborative, and continuous professional learning to build internal capacity for instructional leadership
- Collect, share, and carefully analyze data to make informed decisions
- Monitor progress, accept responsibility for outcomes, and immediately take necessary corrective actions

Impact

Describe your organization’s track record of dramatically improving schools or systems and/or radically increasing outcomes for targeted subgroups of students: LSI’s district partnerships result in closing the achievement gap by equipping all students with the social, emotional, and cognitive skills to thrive in the 21st century. We believe these skills are necessary to help break the cycle of poverty.

In 2014, LSI began a partnership with Palm Beach County Schools, Florida, to transform teaching and learning to high levels of rigor required by College and Career Readiness Standards. This work resulted in 70% of participating schools improving by one or more letter grades in as little as one year. Since then, we have successfully implemented our Schools for Rigor model of school improvement in Seminole, Pinellas, Putnam and Osceola counties in Florida. Outside of Florida, this model is being implemented in Des Moines, IA; Caroline County, MD; Evansville, IA; Lancaster, PA; Oklahoma City, OK; Dayton, OH; Grand Island, NE; and in Phoenix, AZ.

In 2015, Des Moines Public Schools partnered with LSI to build capacity of leadership, rigorous instruction, and student academic teams at 22 schools. Their goal was to make rapid progress towards becoming a national model for urban education by ensuring an accountability system with safeguards for the most vulnerable students, including Black, Latino, low-income students, students with disabilities, and English learners. A recent study of the Des Moines implementation identified these key findings:

- Students in Year 1 schools improved by 7% in reading and 3% in math
- Students in Year 2 schools improved by 15% in reading and 6% in math
- All high school students in partner schools improved by 37% in reading and 26% in math
- Partner schools reduced achievement gaps by 4-7% over one school year

This study meets What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards at Level II as a well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study that allows causal inferences.

School improvement is hard work, but it is the right work. Our partner districts and schools are unique in many ways, but what they have in common is their unshakable belief that all students can learn at high levels of rigor. They have seized the opportunity to unlock the power of leaders, teachers, and students to achieve their highest potential. **Now we look forward to partnering with you.**

To learn more, visit: [https://www.learningsciences.com/rigor](https://www.learningsciences.com/rigor)

---