

School Improvement Conference

Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School



MDE/NCA Spring School
Improvement Conference
Illinois Education Association
April 14, 2011

Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School

Taft IT Program Overview

- Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School is organized for student success using the following model:
 - Preparatory Academy serves grades 9 and 10
 - Senior Institute serves grades 11 and 12



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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



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CBS Evening News Video December 2006

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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

Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School

Demographics

- Demographics
 - 93% African-American
 - 3% White
 - 3% Multi-racial
 - 1% Asian
 - 72% Free and Reduced Lunch
 - 60% Male; 40% Female
 - 35% Students with Disabilities

Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School

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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.

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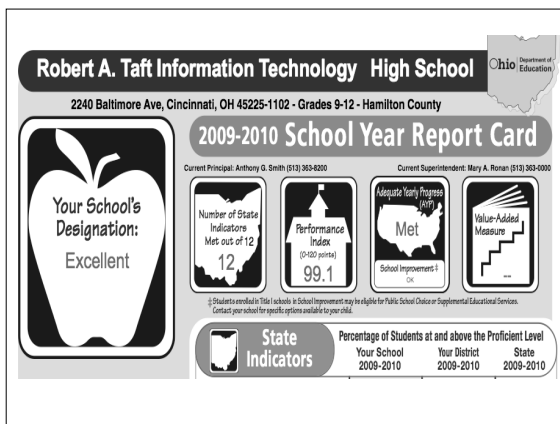
Transformational Change

- 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.

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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

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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

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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)
 - The Five Dysfunctions of a Team (Lencioni)

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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.

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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.

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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.

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School Motto

Taft Information Technology High School

Academics • College Access • Related Services • Activities

Parent/Community • Students • Staff • Partnerships

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.

Quick Links
Home
Dashboard

Principal's Message • New Building • General Information

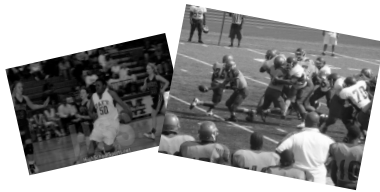
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2345 Baltimore Avenue Cincinnati, OH 45221 Phone: 513-363-8200 Fax: 513-363-8330
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CO-CURRICULARS

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Increased Student “Buy In”

- Co-curricular activities reflect increased student involvement, support
 - Pre-restructuring: 30 students involved
 - Currently: More than 350 students involved



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- Sports teams achieved league championships in:
 - Basketball (boys and girls)
 - Track (boys and girls)
 - Football
 - Baseball



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- Sports teams achieved league championships in:
 - Basketball (boys and girls)
 - Track (boys and girls)
 - Football
 - Baseball
- Many students are at school from 7:30 a.m. and stay until as late as 8:00 p.m.

Taft Senators win state championship

Video | Photo

WS-1

Posted: 03/26/2011

By: John Popovich

COLUMBUS - The Taft Senators won the Ohio Division III state championship Saturday evening with an overwhelming 95-52 victory over Cleveland Central Catholic.

It was never a close contest. Taft led by ten points after one quarter, and spurted to a 30 point lead by halftime. At the end of three quarters, Taft led 74 to 25.

01:10 / 01:22

Embed Email

KEY STRATEGIES

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Key Strategies

- Cincinnati Bell Partnership
 - Tutoring
 - Incentives
- Safety Net Program
 - 5th Quarter
 - Intervention
 - Individual Learning Plans
- Teacher Empowerment
 - Professional Development
 - Technology

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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

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Cincinnati Bell Tutoring Program

- The Senior Institute Manager and Principal review 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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Cincinnati Bell Tutoring Program

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 - OGT standards are used
 - Disaggregated data is used to see patterns in problem areas
 - Tutors' strengths are considered when matching subject areas
- 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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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 \$750,000 has been awarded as part of this initiative.

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Safety Net Program 5th Quarter

- Comprehensive safety net opportunities have increased Taft IT High School's student graduation rate
 - Students are notified as soon as a deficiency occurs
 - Students are 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



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Safety Net Program 5th Quarter

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 - Students are notified as soon as a deficiency occurs
 - Students are given multiple opportunities to address deficiencies
- Students have opportunities to repair credit deficiencies
 - Before and after school
 - On Saturdays
 - 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.

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Safety Net Program (continued)

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



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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 this plan following the first semester of the school year
 - This plan is updated at the end of the school year



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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.

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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.



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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 each and every classroom)

Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School

Upward to Excellence

- We are very pleased with our progress of being rated EXCELLENT on the Ohio School Report Card and being named a Blue Ribbon award recipient by the US Department of Education.



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Our commitment is to move our students onward and upward.



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Upward to Excellence

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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.

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Upward to Excellence

- Taft Technology also received a Bronze rating from US News and World Reports.
- Our co-curricular participants can be proud that we have received the Harold A. Meyer Award for sportsmanship, ethics and integrity the last three years.
- Finally, we have been named an Ohio School of Promise for the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and the 2010-2011 school years.

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Principal Turns Around Failing High School, One Student at a Time

Principal Anthony Smith Teams Up With Teachers And Local Phone Company to Improve Conditions.

BY RON CLAIBORNE AND MAGGY PATRICK
March 18, 2011



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For years, Cincinnati's Taft Information Technology High School was notorious for being a dilapidated, crime-ridden school filled with failing and forgotten students.



Watch "World News with Diane Sawyer" for more on this story tonight on ABC.

Teachers didn't want to teach there, and it was often considered to be the worst slum school in the city. It was so dysfunctional that each clock told a different time - all of which were wrong.

"There was no way I was going to let my son go to Taft," said Shonda Fowler, whose son is now a high school student.

Things began to change nine years ago. Taft got a new principal, his name is Anthony Smith, and the motto he brought to Taft: "Failure is not an option." The

School Improvement Conference

Upward to Excellence

Our new goal is to work diligently to receive
a rating of
EXCELLENT WITH DISTINCTION.



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