

Iowa



Schools

Central Decatur

South Elementary
North Elementary
Central Decatur Middle/High

Saydel

Cornell Elementary
Woodside Middle
Saydel High

NIET's 2012 Teacher Incentive Fund grant in partnership with Central Decatur Community School District and Saydel Community School District introduced TAP to Iowa schools for the first time. In an option new to the Fiscal Year 2012 TIF grants, part of this grant focuses on attracting, retaining, and developing the effectiveness of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) teachers, and increasing student achievement in STEM. As part of the project, STEM teachers will be able to seek additional training at nearby universities. Central Decatur partnered with Graceland University, while Saydel teachers will be able to seek training and coursework from Grand View University. Finally, in an effort to recruit new STEM teachers, districts will work with the aforementioned universities to train student teachers on the TAP System by placing them in Central Decatur and Saydel classrooms.

All schools in Central Decatur and Saydel Community School Districts used the 2012–2013 school year as a planning year, and efforts centered on recruiting, identifying, and training TAP staff and mentor and master teachers. Evaluation efforts for this first year consisted of collecting baseline data regarding the steps taken toward implementation of TAP, as well as the perceptions of the TAP System. Evaluation data include progress reports and focus groups with teachers and administrators.

The Districts

Central Decatur

Central Decatur Community School District, located in Leon, Iowa, is in one of the lowest-income, rural regions of the state. It has two elementary schools and one middle/high school. South Elementary, serving students in grades PK–2, and North Elementary, serving students in grades 3–5, have separate campuses, but share a principal. Central Decatur Middle/High School serves students in grades 6–12. The Iowa Department of Education reported 743 students enrolled across the three schools during the 2012–2013 school year. Of these, 51.4 percent were male, 95.6 percent were White, and 61.8 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Saydel

Saydel Community School District, near Iowa's capital city, is a largely rural public school district with high levels of poverty. Within the district are schools: Cornell Elementary, Woodside Middle, and Saydel High School. The Iowa Department of Education reported 1,373 students enrolled across the three schools during the 2012–2013 school year. Of these, 52.2 percent were male, 86.8 percent were White, 8.1 percent were Hispanic, and 53.2 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Key Evaluation Findings

Preparations made during the 2012–13 Year

- Central Decatur and Saydel had nearly 90 percent approval districtwide in its vote to implement TAP.
- Both districts hired STEM master teachers to build STEM expertise in weekly cluster meetings.
- Principals, assistant principals, master and mentor teachers were trained to use the TAP Leadership Team Observation Rubric during TAP CORE training.
- Teacher and administrator representatives from Central Decatur and Saydel, along with representatives from the local teacher unions for both districts, completed site visits to current TAP schools in Arizona, Indiana and Arkansas.
- Both districts received “reverse site visits” from current career and mentor teachers in Arizona and Tennessee.
- Saydel and Central Decatur sent 10 representatives each to the 2013 National TAP Conference in Washington, D.C.
- Both districts sent 10 representatives each to the 2013 TAP Summer Institute in Arizona.
- Leadership teams and district-level administrators gained access to the TAP Portal and CODE.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups—one for mentor and master teachers and one for principals—were held with representatives from Saydel and Central Decatur School districts to discuss the status and impressions of TAP implementation. Nine mentor and master teachers participated in one focus group. As illustrated in the quotes to the right, teachers reported feelings of excitement and anticipation about the potential success TAP could bring to their schools.

“I hoped that [TAP] would bring us all together, and we are all in this to increase our students’ achievement.”

-IA TAP Teacher

Six Iowa administrators, one representative from each participating school, participated in a one-hour focus group. Principals were also optimistic about potential future impacts of the TAP System in their schools. Administrators mentioned that exposure to other TAP schools significantly motivated their teachers to see the potential in TAP. Additionally, principals mentioned that TAP implementation drew increased positive interest from neighboring non-TAP schools.

“I feel like we are just ready to go and we are very excited. I feel like our leadership team is going to do whatever we can to make TAP successful. It has been an exciting journey.”

-IA TAP Teacher

“I talked [to my teachers] about what I believe are the benefits of a program like this and the level of support that we couldn’t even dream of providing. That exists within the [TAP] System.”

-IA TAP Principal