



The Transatlantic Schools Innovation Alliance

The Transatlantic Schools Innovation Alliance is a partnership designed to improve teaching and learning by creating a network of schools in London and New York City engaged in action research in adolescent literacy instruction. The goal is to blend the ideas and strategies from educators in two countries with relevant research to design, study, and disseminate more effective practices and supports.

The Alliance includes school heads and teachers from six schools in each city, along with representatives from national sponsoring organizations in the United States and the United Kingdom. Over the next several years, participants will develop and study approaches to teaching literacy to diverse students, and share their knowledge broadly with practitioners and policy makers in the two countries.

Through the Alliance, the participants intend to form learning communities within schools and across the Atlantic that will enable them to identify, adapt, and implement effective practices to raise literacy achievement against standards and improve curriculum content and relevance. Over the long term, the participants hope to eliminate achievement and attainment gaps; promote intercultural understanding; strengthen supports from partners, the community, and local education authorities; and foster learning about strategies and cultures that promote achievement.

Why a transatlantic alliance?

London and New York face similar challenges. They both have ethnically diverse populations with a large number of first languages spoken. Both cities have high levels of poverty next to areas of extreme wealth. And both cities strive to find innovative ways to invest in education to improve achievement and contribute to long-term economic wealth.

To explore common challenges and consider common solutions, the U.K. Department for Education and Skills (DfES), working with private organizations and universities in the U.S., in 2004 set up a two-part conference entitled “No City Left Behind.” The over-arching idea that emerged was to link schools in London and New York into an alliance that would build on and extend knowledge about effective practice from both countries.

The aim would be to focus shared energy and expertise on exchanging, developing, and embedding the very best of each country’s educational practice in order to raise standards of achievement and to increase aspiration. Working with leading educators and administrators on both sides of the Atlantic, the schools would use the opportunities afforded by this age of globalization and technology to develop a transatlantic community of practice.

How is TSIA organized?

The lead organizations for the Alliance are the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University and New Visions for Public Schools in the U.S. and the Department for Children, Schools & Families, the Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills and the Innovation Unit Ltd through the Next Practice project in the U.K. The participating U.S. schools are the High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology, the Bronx Engineering and Technology Academy, the School for Community Research and Learning, the Bronx Leadership Academy II, Manhattan Bridges, and the Marble Hill School for International Studies. In the U.K., the participating schools are the Leigh Technology Academy, the Lilian Baylis Technology School, Skinners’ Company’s School for Girls Business and Enterprise College, Westminster Academy, Bow School, and the City of London Academy.

School heads and teachers from the participating schools, along with representatives from the sponsoring organizations, will meet periodically in their home countries, and meet jointly via teleconference four times a year and face-to-face twice annually. The schools are grouped into clusters of four (two U.K. and two U.S.) based on common interests and will develop networking and sharing opportunities with their cluster schools. In addition to providing leadership for the project, the sponsoring organizations also will assist participating schools by helping them adapt

literacy action research strategies to meet local inquiry and improvement needs; providing or brokering related professional development; facilitating and supporting school level data analysis; communicating regularly with transatlantic counterparts; co-designing cross-school and transatlantic meetings and CPD; assuring schools' regular reporting on their work; and ensuring coherence among program components at the school level. The sponsoring organizations also will provide ongoing documentation and coordinate the evaluation of the project.

What are the next steps for TSIA?

The Alliance will move from the idea to the operation of networks beginning in November, 2007, when participating schools and sponsoring organizations will hold their initial face-to-face seminar. At that meeting, the participants will begin to develop mutually agreed upon processes for the work of the partnership as well as get to know each other and each others' schools. The schools will begin to undertake literacy projects and inquiry following this initial meeting.

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