



## **NUA SUMMARY**

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The purpose of the National Urban Alliance (NUA) is to provide professional development to teachers and leaders in urban school districts across the country, so as to improve the academic performance of all students, especially those who have been labeled as underperforming. The organization partners with school districts to provide on-going, embedded professional development using research-based instructional strategies that foster higher-level thinking. Each partnership is overseen by an NUA Project Director and district-designated Partnership Coordinator. Professional development services are provided by NUA Mentors on-site in each participating school where the mentor models and teaches best instructional practices, and guides teachers with implementing best practices in their classrooms. The NUA Pedagogy of Confidence focuses on developing students' thinking processes through learning strategies that build on students' strengths. The work of NUA is based on the core beliefs that all students are capable of high intellectual performance and all students learn best through culturally relevant teaching. NUA professional development enables teachers to improve student learning through instructional practices that explicitly focus on the development of thinking processes (cognition and metacognition).

The NUA conducts an instructional assessment (IA) in each district prior to initiating services to identify strengths and areas for improvement, to clarify the goals for the partnership, and to develop the cross-schools course of study and the within school course of action for the professional development services provided. Across the life of the partnership, data are collected to document and guide the course of study and course of action, and to assess impacts on teachers and students. Data documenting impacts of NUA professional development include: surveys, focus group/interview responses, teacher self-assessments, classroom observations, student and teacher artifacts, and standardized test scores. These data indicate that teachers are convinced of the effectiveness of the NUA professional development model, and believe student learning has been positively affected by the application of NUA learning strategies for improved thinking and expression. They cite evidence of increased student participation, better understanding, improved writing, and improved standardized test scores. Students report that learning is fun and easy, and they earn better grades, because their teachers use (NUA) learning strategies and have them use the strategies to complete their work. Students also report using NUA strategies at home and teaching their younger siblings how to use NUA strategies to complete their own homework. Below is a brief summary of the impact on student test performance in several NUA Partnership districts.

### **Albany Public Schools**

After two years of NUA services, Albany students in grades 3-8 who met or exceeded proficiency standards on the New York State exams increased by 14 percent in English Language Arts and 21 percent in mathematics. In addition, the performance index scores for the sixth and seventh grades in middle schools actively participating in NUA increased by 32-44% and 18-24%, respectively. (2008)

In 2009 all of the district's elementary and middle schools exceeded New York State Education Department ELA benchmarks for students in grades 3-8.

Overall, 61 percent of the district's students in grades 3-8 achieved proficiency this year, attaining Level 3 or Level 4. That's a 24 percent gain over 2008, when 49 percent of the district's students achieved the top two levels in ELA. (2009)



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### **Newark Public Schools**

After receiving NUA services for three years, Newark middle school special needs students' reading scores improved 7.5% while all other similar students in the state improved 3.8%. At the high school level, students' language arts scores on state exams increased by 10.5 percentage points compared to non-participating high schools students' scores which decreased by .54 percentage points. (2007)

### **Minneapolis West Metropolitan Education Program**

During four years of NUA services in the Minneapolis West Metropolitan Education Program, students in grades 3-7 made three times the progress in both reading and math when compared with similar students who did not participate. (2006)

### **Seattle Public School**

At the outset of the Seattle-NUA Partnership, student performance across the district was 5 - 8% below the state passing rate, and subgroup performances were 20 - 35% below the state. After three years of NUA professional development, the passing rates of ALL tenth graders, but especially African American and Latino tenth graders, had improved by 30 - 35% in Reading and Writing, equaling or exceeding the State passing rates and reducing the performance gap for African American and Latino tenth graders by 8%. By the completion of the SPS/NUA Initiative (8 year duration), the aggregate achievement of 4th and 10th graders went from approximately 60% meeting state standards to 81%. In 2008, 87% of SPS Class of 2009 met WASL graduation requirements.

### **Indianapolis Public Schools**

After four years of NUA services in the Indianapolis Public Schools, overall student performance on state assessments improved by 31.9% compared with statewide improvement of 11.76%. In addition, sixth grade scores in the district increased 106.26% while the state sixth grade scores improved by just 33.4%. (2005) NUA recognizes that standardized test scores are the result of multiple complex variables, and that changes in scores are just one indicator of improved learning. We collect multiple types of data and examine them in relationship to the whole to fully understand the impact of the NUA Pedagogy. The preponderance of evidence suggests that while NUA professional development is engaging and effective, it is, more importantly, transformative; providing a new paradigm for teachers and fostering a love of learning in students.

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