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Visionary Blended Learning Pilot Program Continues In Iowa for Second Year The Alvo Institute and Grant Wood Area Education Agency Release White Paper and Sign New Contract

May 25, 2015-Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA), one of Iowa's nine educational service agencies, and The Alvo Institute, a leading educational support firm that helps schools design and implement blended learning, have jointly released a white paper documenting the overwhelming success in an uncommon, multi-district, large scale blended learning implementation.

The year one successes and lessons learned are documented in a white paper released today titled "Scaling Up: Building a Successful Blended Learning Program with Existing Funds." The white paper highlights the significant shift in teacher practice and student experience as school teams transitioned into blended learning. The paper also highlights how the progress across five different districts in the GWAEA region was accomplished by using only state allocated funding. "We have made a deep commitment to blended learning, and have reallocated funds to support that commitment," says Lisa Wilson, programs and services administrator for GWAEA. "We hope other districts and agencies can learn from what we have developed. More money is not always the gatekeeper of innovation."

"Many large scale blended efforts are supported with funding from foundations, leaving those without outside funding to think the promise of blended is out of their reach. We were thrilled to partner with GWAEA to develop a support plan, which included critical 1:1 coaching, that used only their state allocated funds to create transformation across several districts. This effort is an exemplar for all districts across the country," says Rebecca Tomasini, The Alvo Institute founder and CEO.

The white paper, available at <http://thealvoinstitute.com/blended-learning-pubilications/> describes the unique pilot project from inception.

Following on stunning results from the program's first year long, multi-district pilot of blended learning, together, The Alvo Institute and GWAEA have announced plans to continue with a new contract in support of expanding the large scale blended learning implementations' professional development across several districts in East Central Iowa.

"We see blended learning as a great technique for today's learners," said Wilson. "Blended learning allows teachers to personalize instruction and interventions to best meet the needs of all students in the classroom. This agreement with Alvo ensures we'll have a familiar framework for the incremental and steady transformation of instructional practices that has already started to emerge from last year's pilot program."

Last year GWAEA partnered with Alvo to facilitate the design, implementation, and change management to bring a very high touch model of blended learning to 10 schools in the GWAEA service area as they transitioned to blended learning. The scope and scale of this effort, along with the unique funding model, over a single year, is unlike any other blended implementation completed to date in the U.S. With support from GWAEA, schools participating in the blended learning program received professional development, access to Illuminate Education-an intuitive data management tool, and online content including DreamBox Learning. Professional development and tools provided by The Alvo Institute supported teachers, their site leadership teams and coaches on how to implement deep differentiation in the classroom using blended learning techniques, and introduced new methods to augment traditional curriculum with a goal of engaging students through competency-based education. In turn, schools learned how to use a data decision-making framework to provide personalized supports in a blended learning environment.

"Transitioning teacher practice is a complex process. Our partnership with GWAEA proved that delivering high quality, deeply personalized professional development, using differentiated all faculty workshops and ongoing in-person, virtual 1:1 and small group coaching, across multiple districts is possible" said Tomasini.

Today's announcement will enable the ten schools currently participating in the pilot to continue, and will open the door for additional districts to apply for participation during the upcoming school year.

"The GWAEA blended pilot is proving that real change happens one teacher at a time," added Tomasini, "And done well, that change can be brought to scale with existing resources without losing the personalization that teachers need to transform their practice."

Do you have questions and inquiries? Contact Rebecca Tomasini, rebecca@thealvoinstitute.com cell 626.862.5341.

About Grant Wood Area Education Agency

Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA) is the second largest of nine Iowa Area Education Agencies (AEAs) that were created in 1974 by the Iowa legislature to ensure equal educational opportunities for all children from birth through age 21.

As a regional service agency, GWAEA provides special education and school improvement services for students, families, teachers, administrators, and their communities. GWAEA works as a partner with public and accredited, non-public schools to help students, school staff, parents and communities meet educational challenges.

With nearly 500 staff members, GWAEA provides hundreds of services each day for the students, teachers, administrators and families in East Central Iowa schools.

About the Alvo Institute

The Alvo Institute, LLC (www.thealvoinstitute.com) provides practical design, implementation, evaluation and professional development services to help schools, districts and educational agencies design, implement and sustainably operate innovative, 21st century districts, schools and classrooms.

Founded in 2008, and based out of Oakland, CA, Alvo was the first technology agnostic firm in the country to help schools and districts design and implement blended learning as a path to personalization. Alvo serves a wide range of clients from new schools to multi-district educational agencies. Some of Alvo's current and past clients include Grant Wood Area Education Agency, which is the largest educational agency in Iowa, urban districts, including Los Angeles Unified and Oakland Unified, award winning charter schools including Summit Public Schools, KIPP Courage Houston, Alpha Public Schools and Thrive Public Schools, rural school districts in Oregon and Illinois, and independent schools in New York and Florida. Alvo's online and in-person design and exploration workshops, critically acclaimed online courses to introduce teams to blended and ongoing coaching and professional development services to help schools and districts bring blended to scale.