

2015 QTEA Impact Application

James Lick Middle School

Award Amount: \$20,597.00

- Describe your strategies, projects, and/or practices. Tell us who your focal student groups are, what the strategy is, and how it supports or aligns to the Six Strategies for Success and Vision 2025 Essentials

Our project at our school is to boost literacy among our student population, with a focus on English Language Learners and African American students. Given the new Common Core standards where literacy plays a key role in both ELA and Math, our school is aiming to increase writing across all grade levels and content areas. Our strategies for accomplishing this include training teachers to teach literacy within their content area, using data from school-wide assessments, and supporting teachers through professional development to improve their in-class engagement strategies.

Our focal student groups are our African American, Latino and English Learner students who have historically been performing far below the standards in comparison to our White and Asian students. Our school's combined demographics between Black and Latino students are at about 79% of the total population, one of the highest in the district. Our EL population is holding at about 32% of the total population. This year, our school has just over 600 students.

We used Strategy 1 of the Six Strategies for Success, the use of student data, to make informed decisions in selecting our focal populations. Last year's SBAC data, corroborated by our CLA data, shows that only 2 of our African American students met the standard in English Language Arts (5%) and 0 met or exceeded the standard in Math (0%). As for our Latino students, 70% of our population, only 11% met or exceeded the standards in Math and 16% met or exceed the standards in English Language Arts. EL students performed far worse as only 1 student met the standard in ELA and Math.

In addition, we will continue to use Strategy 1 throughout our project implementation. Last spring, we piloted two rounds of a school-wide, site-based writing benchmark, using specific topics aligned to our district spirals. Our humanities team worked collectively to create the rubric we were to use to assess the student writing samples. Additionally, the ILT and Humanities team played a key role in providing site based professional development for all staff members in preparation to administer and score the writing assessments. All staff, PE teachers, VAPA teachers, and school counselors received the training and participated in the writing assessment exercises. During the spring of 2015, we ROCI'd two rounds of these assessments, scored them, and identified next steps. This year, our ILT team continues the efforts initiated during the 2014-15 SY and made adjustments to make the writing more culturally relevant, Common-Core-aligned, and engaging.

Continuing with Strategy 1, we will use student data to monitor progress towards our goals. The Instructional Leadership Team will analyze the data from each of our site-specific benchmark to measure the progress of our best practices. We anticipate administering this benchmark four times in 2015-16. After each round of scoring, the Instructional Leadership Team will lead their respective departments in looking at the data to determine a narrower literacy focus and strategy-sharing session so teachers can implement best practices in their own classrooms.

Strategy 2, or the RTI2 model, will also become key once departments and teachers individually determine what their literacy target will be for their classrooms. Instructional Lead Team members will facilitate department-specific professional development so that teachers will learn differentiation and small group facilitation from their colleagues. ILT has also already begun the process of peer observation and student shadowing, so that teachers can expand their pedagogical toolboxes. In addition, our on-site IRF's have been working in small group PLC's and 1-on-1 to aid teachers in their differentiation of skills and literacy in order to meet Tier 1 and Tier 2 students within their classroom. Finally, teachers have already begun lunchtime and after-school "focus groups" for students to work more closely with the students who need Tier 3 support.

Strategy 3 aligns with our goal because students have the opportunity to improve their writing abilities; our counseling team, and common research, shows the correlation between literacy and future success in college or careers. Research published in Education Weekly showed how GPAs have a closer correlation between college graduate rates compared to SAT scores. Research also shows good writers perform well in school, thereby achieving great GPA scores. On a more macro and more serious note, California predicts with great accuracy how many prison beds it will need in the future by looking at 5th grade literacy rates. The role that literacy plays in a student's future--its ability to determine a student's future in college or career--is incontrovertible.

Strategy 4 helps us with our mission and vision at our school because the multi-tiered levels of support we are receiving are helping us carry out our writing assessment strategy. The work we have engaged with Partners for School Innovation helping our ILT organize this work, our support received from Multilingual Pathways Department has assisted with differentiating for our newcomer and EL students and the guidance from our humanities team at the district level to our site representatives have guided their work in creating the rubrics and professional development for our staff.

Strategy 5 is reinforced as we provide ongoing training to our staff through the Leadership Team, inviting in of guest speakers, and work with the Instructional Coaches, making them feel more empowered and well versed in their pedagogy around writing. On-going professional development that is interesting and meaningful to our staff can encourage and motivate them to work collaboratively, creating a positive work environment. We hold a monthly new teacher professional learning circle that encourages staff to stay. Our recent hires have remarked upon

how "well-supported" they feel; teachers that are happy tend to stay and attracts others who want to be a part of the forward movement at our school.

Strategy 6 has some correlation but requires more input from our families to fully engage them as outlined in our district Family Engagement Strategies. Last year, our full-time Family Liaison ran a series of workshops, that will be repeated this fall, in educating parents around literacy. The series included activities parents could do with students at home, basic elements of a paragraph so parents could understand teacher comments, and

While the writing assessment strategy (increased literacy) is our main focus and school-wide goal, there are subgoals and sub areas of foci we have also taken on to make this work more meaningful. They are briefly described below:

- Peer observations will occur so that staff can learn from one another and identify best practices to implement in their classrooms
- Teacher shadowing students to fully understand the "day of a student" has begun and has allowed the ILT to identify culturally relevant curriculum, best practices to engage students, and has identified the disparities our students of color face daily that are often unintentional but rather systemic.
- Implementation of Performance Based Assessments using Blooms Taxonomy and Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to target the Common Core Standards more in-depth.

The above mentioned strategy and subgoals closely align to our district's Vision 2025. Engaging students in Performance Based Assessments promote the use of project based learning and helps our students think differently both independently and collaboratively with their peers. Differentiating our writing assessments and carrying out our subgoals also aligns because equity is always at the center. Our staff is motivated to begin the process of examining the systemic racism and disadvantages our students of color face on a daily basis through their experiences in student/teacher shadowing, peer observations and development of culturally relevant curriculum.

- **What outcome(s) or change(s) do you believe this project or practice will have at your school site? Note: Quantitative and/or qualitative data are encouraged.**

This project will have multiple expected outcomes at our school.

1. Reclassify 50%+ of LTELs. Originally, this was a huge factor in implementing our goal of boosting literacy across content areas. We were aware that EL's who are not reclassified prior to high school do not graduate with the credits to attend a 4-year college, because their schedules

are filled with EL support classes. Thus, at its core, our school goal of literacy originated from a vision of "college and career readiness" (Strategy 3).

2. See 30%+ of students who scored Level 2 on writing diagnostic move to Level 3. This originated as our method of tracking our progress towards Outcome #1 (Strategy 1: data usage). Now, we have expanded our vision, and our benchmark has evolved to become document-based and thus Common Core / SBAC-aligned (Strategy 1).

3. African-American students will meet or exceed 25% proficiency on SBAC. One of the mottos within the Leadership Team is "a rising tide lifts all boats." When teachers are differentiating curriculum to meet the needs of all students (Strategy 2), and implementing literacy practices in their respective subjects, this will benefit not only our lowest-performing demographic, but all students.

4. Increase in-class minutes for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students (measures: decreased referrals, suspensions). We aim to achieve this through a combination of using restorative practices, as well as teacher professional development. In order to do this, we have begun implementing Peer Observations and Student Shadow Days. Teachers who participate in peer observations learn from one another and improve their pedagogy. Teachers identify best practices and implement those practices in their own classroom. This also builds collegial relationships and creates opportunities to conduct lesson studies among other collaborative activities. Teachers who shadow students for a day have the opportunity to experience first hand what our students experience on a daily basis. Here too, similar to peer observations, teachers have the chance to improve their pedagogy and identify best practices. They experience what curriculum engages students the most, what systemic oppressions to avoid, and empathize.

5. We will target a 98% attendance goal. When we are working towards Outcomes #1-4, we believe that attendance will not be a problem. Students will be so engaged in rigor and relevance that they will not skip class or arrive late.

- As part of the application, you will provide a detailed action plan for how you plan to implement this within 12 months. In addition to this action plan, below please identify the key stakeholders, major milestones and any major risks you foresee?

Sent to the QTEA email is the rough timeline that we have for the implementation of our project, which includes the key stakeholders of the Instructional Leadership Team, departments, teachers, and most importantly, our students with an equity lens on EL's and African American students. The timeline hinges upon the following approaches:

* Benchmark assessment data;

* Peer observations with a focus on Focal Students (a long term EL student "on the cusp" of reclassification, or African American student);

* Student Shadow Days in which teachers shadow one of their focal students for a day.

Benchmark assessment data measures our progress towards literacy in the content area, and measures how our practices support students in passing the CELDT and SBAC tests, as well as how well we are supporting students in Common Core. We have already rolled out two rounds of our school-wide benchmark assessment. While the data has been valuable, the conversations and calibration around writing expectations across disciplines has been even moreso.

Teachers will engage in their choice of Peer Observations with a focus on Focal Students, or Student Shadows. this will provide both qualitative data that we can use to reconsider our practices, build empathy between students and teachers, and motivate teachers to reflect deeply on their practices.

Possible risks of looking at data is that data can be rejected by staff members who may claim the results are due to flaws in the testing, or due to external circumstances. We have experienced this before, particularly when looking at our school-wide referral rates as related to race, as well as when looking at CELDT scores. We will work through this aversion by making it clear that data is an important part of the process--that it is formative and not summative--and not evaluative. In addition, the Lead Team will continue to build relational trust and a culture of self-reflection by serving as role models and reflective practitioners.

Another possible risk of Peer Observations and Student Shadow Days is the fear that teachers may feel when other teachers enter their classrooms. Again, we will continue to address this through building relational trust, and establishing the non-evaluative nature of these observations by using specific, strength-based tools and an anonymous reporting process. Finally, we will provide an option for teachers to visit other schools for their Peer Observations, as other schools and other teachers may use different strategies and practices.

In order to build strong relational trust across grade levels, disciplines, and between students and teachers, the ILT has created a Culture & Climate Committee that recognizes staff for their achievements and progress towards goals. With this foundation of strong relationships, and with the QTEA grant we hope to receive to continue our reflective practices, we plan to continue our growth as educators focusing on the literacy and achievement of EL's and African American students.

BUDGET:

Sent to the QTEA email as well is the budget spreadsheet for our proposed amount, which is just under \$21,000.

Most of this money will be used to pay for the substitute teachers we will need in order for teachers to partake in peer observations and shadows.

Another \$3,500 will be used to pay for the Instructional Leadership Team's extended hours on days when a deep data dive is required.

Finally, \$2,000 is allocated for the possibility of bringing in an outside consultant who may provide additional strategies around literacy, culturally responsive curriculum for our Latino and African American students, or research around best practices we can implement as a school.

Thank you kindly for reading this application. We appreciate your time and consideration.

- Also, as part of your application, you'll send a detailed budget set-up form. Below can you tell us, how much is needed for implementation? (Ranges provided between \$0 and \$30,000)

\$15,000 - \$30,000