

2015 QTEA Impact Application

Lawton Alternative School

Award amount: \$37,859.70

- 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

The focus of this project is the strengthening and expansion of our Academic Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI2) approach, aligned to SFUSD's second strategy for success. Our students have a history of high achievement, with nearly 80% achieving proficiency in English Language Arts, and with 60-95% (depending on grade level) meeting or exceeding benchmark standards as measured by the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment. However, this data also indicates a persistent achievement gap: those students not achieving proficiency are disproportionately African American, English Learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged and Special Education. This is our target population. Our challenge, as outlined in our BSC Mid-Plan Review and Addendum submitted this fall, is that "Students who do not meet the benchmarks are left significantly at risk because the instructional level of students around them is rising, and their performance tends to be stagnant. These students are often referred for special education for concerns that would be better addressed by early intervention strategies, allowing them to keep instructionally current with their classroom. Early intervention procedures and best practices, delivered by highly qualified specialist, have shown themselves to be extremely effective."

To address this challenge, we hired an Academic RTI Facilitator (hereafter referred to as ARTIF) who began working at our school in the fall of 2015. The funding of this position was a priority for both staff and for the PTA. Currently, the focus of our academic intervention program is early literacy. Our ARTIF works with students in K-3rd grade, supports teachers in grades K-8, and assists with the implementation of assessment, data collection and progress monitoring for students who have been identified as reading below grade level. An additional priority is the coordination between our Academic and Behavioral RTI. A team of our teachers began training at the Behavioral RTI Initiative in 2013, and continue to serve a leadership role sharing PBIS strategies and creating a positive school culture. This year staff has also been working with Dr. Sherroky Hollie to reflect upon implicit bias and to implement culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices. These practices build upon the work of the behavioral RTI team and address the Tier 1 socioemotional (as well as academic) needs of our target population in the classroom. A final goal for our Academic RTI program is the collaboration between special and general educators, accomplished through early identification, coordinated intervention, and shared responsibility for those students identified as "at risk" to prevent the over-referral of

students for special education evaluation. Exemplifying this collaboration is the partnership between our SAP and behavioral RTI teams. We have begun to develop a system wherein the needs of a student referred to the SAP team may be addressed by the behavioral RTI team who offer suggestions and strategies to general education teachers. Only after Tier 1 strategies (both academic and behavioral) have been consistently implemented for a given period of time are Tier 2 interventions (including referral for SSTs) considered. This collaboration utilizes the expertise of highly trained educators at our school, assigns resources where they are needed, and ultimately decreases the number of students referred for special education testing.

In applying for this award our objective is twofold:

1. To support Tier 1 academic instruction and differentiation in the classroom during the literacy block; and
2. To expand Tier 2 literacy intervention services to include upper grades and middle school students who are not meeting grade level reading benchmarks.

To accomplish the first goal we propose the creation of a leveled book room. This room would primarily be a resource for K-3 teachers (with books at Fountas and Pinnell levels A-N), but would also include a selection of books at the higher levels for students in grades 4-8. Multiple copies of high interest and culturally sensitive leveled books at students' instructional levels are a much needed resource for classroom teachers who are differentiating literacy instruction through the implementation of guided reading groups. High quality consistent guided reading has been shown to be the most effective Tier 1 literacy strategy. Students who are performing below grade level may meet daily with their teacher in a small group for reading practice at their instructional level, with word work and comprehension strategies incorporated. All students (including those who are performing at or above grade level) benefit from targeted instruction at their level, and the chance to read in a small group with their teachers. In second grade and above this small group reading may also take the form of literature circles. Teachers do have leveled readers available to them through the district adopted Treasures program, but these readers do not always represent the range of reading levels in a given class. A leveled book room would provide teachers with a wide selection of high quality authentic literature to choose from, borrow, use for guided reading, and return. The cost of creating a leveled book room would be approximately \$20,000.

In addition to the leveled book room, we propose to offer a series of professional development opportunities around guided reading, differentiated to meet the experience and interest levels of teachers, and facilitated by our ARTIF. One series could cover basics of guided reading: how

to analyze running records to determine students' instructional levels, how to manage independent work while the teacher meets with guided reading groups, and the elements of a guided reading lesson. Other topics for teachers who already use guided reading in their classrooms could include the incorporation of differentiated word work strategies into guided reading lessons, and supporting the three levels (within, beyond, and about) of text comprehension. PD would be offered in the form of a PLC, with the expectation that teachers use books from the book room and share their lessons with the group to build a common base of knowledge around resources and strategies. A portion of this award would cover extended hours and professional reading and resources for this PD. The estimated cost for professional development would be just under \$3000.

Our second objective is the expansion of our Tier 2 literacy intervention. Our BSC analysis of data trends for African American, Latino, Economically Disadvantaged and English Learner students showed that "a high percentage of students who are not meeting benchmarks at the end of the primary grades at our school have been referred to special education. In each class, the number of students who fall behind generally totals 10 to 12 students. Over time those students tend to remain behind." Upper grade students who are far below grade level benchmarks are identified through an analysis of SRI data. The ARTIF has begun to assess those students who are two years or more below grade level using the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment. However, we currently have no intervention materials to use with these students once their needs are identified. With the purchase of high quality leveled intervention books (Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention), the ARTIF and upper grade RSP will be able to collaborate to form reading intervention groups that are compatible with both the upper elementary and middle school schedules. The upper grade RSP currently holds a sixth period (elective) study skills group for students with identified learning disabilities. Our vision is to expand this elective to include general education students who need Tier 2 reading intervention and create a comprehensive, integrated and multi-tiered approach to addressing our target population's needs in reading, math, and organizational skills aligned to the common core curriculum. The class will exemplify inclusive practices and be co-taught by our RSP and ARTIF. By building this class into the middle school schedule and implementing a referral process, we hope to create a sustainable intervention which fosters collaboration between teachers and support providers, fosters dialogue, and ultimately decreases the number of students referred for special education services. Collaboration between general education intervention services and special education is essential to the successful implementation of academic RTI. The cost for the Blue, Red and Gold LLI systems, as well as extension materials (take home books and bags) would be \$15,000.

- 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.

Guided Reading has been shown to be the most effective Tier 1 intervention for struggling readers. When implemented with fidelity using high quality materials students who are reading a year (or less) below grade level can make significant progress in the classroom, working with

their classroom teacher, and without missing valuable instructional time due to pull-out reading support. With the creation of a leveled book room and a focus on implementing guided reading as a high leverage instructional strategy we expect to see a decrease in the number of students identified and referred for Tier 2 services (pull-out or specialist support for students who are reading more than a year below grade level). Staff survey data indicates that the majority of teachers do use guided reading in the classroom and are motivated to deepen their practice and enthusiastic about the creation of a leveled book room. By sharing the innovative teaching practices of colleagues and celebrating students' growth at the end of the 2015-16 school year, we hope to encourage increased (100%) staff participation in 2016-17. This project will be sustainable in future years with no further cost

The expansion of the range of our Tier 2 support will allow our ARTIF to work directly with upper elementary and middle grade students who have historically not received any targeted reading support. The number of students who have been identified as needing support is small (between 1-5 per class), but the academic climate at our school where instruction is accelerated to meet the needs of those students who are performing at or above grade level presents an added challenge when it comes to our target population's opportunities for success. With targeted intervention the goal would be for these students to accelerate their progress in reading, showing .5 to 1.0 years of growth as measured by year end Fountas and Pinnell assessments.

- 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?

Our first step in implementation will be to solicit input from teachers and other community stakeholders (including paraprofessional, secretarial and itinerant staff, as well as parents) for ordering high quality leveled book sets and designating a location for the leveled book room. This will happen as soon as we receive notification of our award status, and our ARTIF will meet with publishing representatives to clarify and place orders as soon as funds are available. Orders for Tier 2 intervention materials (LLI kits and supplements) will also be placed. Those teachers who are willing to serve in this advisory capacity will form part of an Academic RTI Task Force which will continue to oversee the creation of the leveled book room and monitor its use and the implementation of guided reading in the classroom. We would hope to receive materials, clear and prepare a space, and start set up of the book room in January 2016 so that the project can be fully implemented in the second semester of this year.

During the current semester, the ARTIF will continue to assess upper grade students who have been identified as reading far below grade level. She will collaborate with the upper grade RSP and middle school counselor to schedule and then provide intervention services for the second semester (January through May 2016).

A series of guided reading PLCs will be offered to teachers beginning in the second semester. Three weekly sessions will be held at each level (beginning, intermediate and advanced).

Teacher participation will be voluntary and will be compensated with extended hours pay. Teachers will use books from the leveled libraries in their classroom guided reading lessons and administrators will offer informal observations of instructional practices.

Several important milestones will be reached at the end of the 2015-2016 school year:

1. The collection and analysis of reading assessment data for students who have been receiving Tier 1 and Tier 2 intervention
2. The reflection of the Academic RTI Task Force and participating teachers on the creation of the book room and the implementation of guided reading in the classroom, with products (videos, exemplary lessons) to be shared with the whole school at a staff meeting
3. The successful creation and scheduling of a co-teaching model addressing the needs of struggling readers (general and special education populations) in the middle school
4. A documented and sustainable system of collaboration between the Behavioral RTI team, SAP and the SST referral process.

Finally, at the start of the 2016-17 school year we hope to see:

1. A decrease in the number of students being referred for Tier 2 intervention services; and a lessening in the disproportionate number of African American, English Learners and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students not achieving at grade level reflected in school wide data.
2. An increase in the number of teachers using the leveled book room and implementing effective Tier 1 reading strategies in the classroom.

There are challenges inherent in creating new systems, particularly in a K-8 school where the needs of both students and teaching staff vary considerably. With only two professional meetings each month ongoing dialogue about student data and instructional initiatives can be difficult to sustain. We will be able to address some of these issues through the collaboration between the behavioral RTI team and SAP, and the creation of an Academic RTI Task Force. Additionally, administration is exploring ways to increase professional development opportunities and schedule grade level collaboration and release time. While our emphasis in the implementation of Academic RTI has been on early intervention, as a K-8 school educators in the upper grades are able to see the impact that these intervention strategies will have on students down the line.

When staff was surveyed about this project and the creation of a leveled book room, 4 out of 22 teachers expressed disinterest in using the room or participating in guided reading professional development. Two felt that it was not relevant to their practice, and two felt that they were already implementing high quality instruction in this area and would not benefit from further support or additional resources. Participation in the project will not be required during this first year of implementation and our efforts will focus on those teachers who are motivated and have already expressed enthusiasm about participating. However, given the urgency of the data from our target populations who continue to struggle in reading at our school the expectation will be that 100% of staff who teach reading implement high quality Tier

1 interventions (guided reading) in 2016-17 in order to break the trend of target students who are struggling disproportionately to meet grade level standards.

Key stakeholders in the project are: administrators (principal and assistant principal), ARTIF, general education teachers, special educators, our target population of students (African American, ELs, socioeconomically disadvantaged and special education who are not reading at grade level) as well as general education students who have met benchmark standards.

Total budget: \$ 37,859.70

- 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)

Other