

## 2015 QTEA Impact Application

### Tenderloin Community Elementary School

Award amount: \$29,991.91

- 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

Introduction: In 1998, a landmark study defined the idea of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and found that traumatic events in childhood correlated with poor physical and mental health in adulthood (Felitti, V et.al. 1998). In the years since that study, we've come to understand that ACEs correlate with a number of poor outcomes in children, including learning and behavioral problems, poor school engagement as well as increased chronic disease (Burke, NJ et. al. 2011; Bethell, CD et.al. 2014). In fact, the former head of the American Academy of Pediatrics recently noted, "Children's exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences is the greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today." Nadine Burke Harris, a San Francisco pediatrician and national leader in the move to increase awareness of and interventions for ACEs, has developed the Center for Youth Wellness in the Bayview-Hunter's Point district to provide interventions for children and families affected by high ACEs. Inspired by her work and recognizing that many of our students have multiple ACEs that impact their learning and well-being, our School is setting out to address and mitigate the effect of ACEs and childhood trauma in our school community.

Background: Among our population of 335 students, 60% are English Learners and 93% qualify for free and reduced lunch. The proportion of our students who score near, at, or above the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) measures ranges from 40% to 60%. Our school's English Language redesignation rate is a bright spot at 54.1%; as recently reported on SBAC measures, 59% of our redesignated students were proficient in English Language Arts as compared to 22% school wide, and 47% were proficient in math as compared to 27% school wide.

The majority of our students (60%) live in the immediate neighborhood, an area marked by high poverty, high crime and overcrowded living conditions. Per the US Census, 60% of our community's households have income <\$25,000/year, and 53% of residents fall below 150% of the federal poverty level, compared with 13.4% city-wide. This neighborhood encompasses less than 1% of the square mileage of San Francisco, but houses 3.1% of the population with a density of 72,500 people/square mile compared to city wide 17,000 people/square mile. Greater than

90% of the rental housing in the neighborhood is studio or 1 bedroom units, so families with children routinely live in very cramped conditions. Crime is also disproportionately high with 9.2% of all violent crime incidents and 21% of drug related incidents reported in San Francisco in 2014 occurring in the 0.35 square mile area that makes up the neighborhood (source: SFPD).

The Bay Area Women's and Children's Center, a nonprofit organization based in the neighborhood for the past 35 years, conducted a community survey in 2014-2015, interviewing 150 parents and community partners. Their findings reflect the stress experienced by children and families living in the neighborhood. The top safety concern among respondents was the threats, both physical and psychological, posed by the drug related crime and unchecked mental health issues that children face in their daily lives simply by walking through the neighborhood. As one respondent explained, "The reality is (kids) are probably not going to be hurt ... but they're constantly worrying about it, so the psychological toll is high. Young teen girls can be subject to harassment in particular." A young woman who grew up here noted, "I saw stuff as a kid that was pretty disturbing. There are lots of folks with mental illness on the streets who are unpredictable and potentially dangerous."

**Focal Student Group:** Our focal student group includes the 70 students—or nearly 20% of our K-5th grade general education population—who face chronic trauma in their lives. This number includes the students, who are identified as homeless, having incarcerated parents or siblings, are living in transitional foster care homes, who are chronically absent, and who have yet to respond to Tier 2 interventions. Our students are primarily from the neighborhood, as well as Western Addition and Bayview-Hunter's Point. Their families live intense, hard lives on the margins; many deal with the generational effects of poverty, divorce, physical abuse, incarceration, violence, and substance abuse in their own lives. Most of the 70 focal group students—all between the ages of 5 and 10—have seen, heard or have been victims of violence.

**Challenge and Opportunity:** In this focal student group, we see patterns at school including excessive tardiness, absenteeism, and academic failure. These students also present explosive outward behaviors and distressing internalizing behaviors during the school day. Too few of these students show growth on English and Math assessments. One example of this is the school's low baseline performance on the SBAC; while 25% of all students met or exceeded standards in ELA, when focusing on ELs only 16% met this benchmark and only 8% of our African American students met this benchmark. Our action research project with the California Office to Reform Education highlighted for us that too many of our students have historically been referred to special education because they were allowed to languish with emotional distress in the general education program. The primary factor inhibiting these students from learning and achieving is the effect of unidentified, undiagnosed, and unchecked trauma.

Our challenge and opportunity is to mitigate the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma—well before there is a need to refer to special education—so that these students can learn and achieve in our school’s general education program.

Implications: From research, we know that the implications for students are clear: If we don’t identify and mitigate the effects of ACEs and trauma early in their young lives, many of these children will fall behind and drop out, predisposing them to repeat, as adults, the patterns they experienced as children (Duke, NN et. al. 2010). Alternatively, they may disproportionately end up in special education, where learning outcomes do not compare favorably to general education outcomes.

The implications for our elementary school community are becoming clearer: Students experiencing significant trauma absorb disproportionate time and focus from our teachers, administrators, and staff. Increasingly, our teachers, administrators and full-time social worker feel overwhelmed by the complexity and time required to set students up with the services and support they need. For example, in our experience, managing the effects of one child’s severe trauma can take 20 hours per week from each of four available adults at school (Principal, Assistant Principal, Social Worker, and Student Advisor). Further, in their struggle to cope with their traumatic experiences when they are at school, these students introduce volatility and anxiety to our overall school climate, affecting the student body more generally and adults at the school.

In the bigger picture, the implications for California school districts are yet to be fully understood. In October 2015, U.S. District Judge Michael W. Fitzgerald of Los Angeles “allowed a novel lawsuit to move forward that calls for a California district to incorporate practices to help students who have faced traumas such as violence, family disruption, incarceration, and poverty...The lawsuit detailed specific traumas faced by the five students, including witnessing friends and neighbors being shot, violence at home and on the way to school, and facing homelessness, foster care, poverty, and race discrimination.” (Source: Mark Walsh, Education Week, School Law blog, 10/1/15.) The existence of this lawsuit suggests that now is the time for schools to work together with district and community partners to get ahead of this trend.

Our Strategy: our school respectfully requests \$30,000 over 12 months to hire an Eradicate and Reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences (ERACE) Advocate. The ERACE Advocate will connect

students in our focal group (and their families) with specific services and resources that can work to mitigate the effects of trauma—and help stabilize students so that they are able to access the academic program and supports. This strategy reinstates an approach that the school implemented successfully in partnership with Bay Area Women’s and Children’s Center (BAWCC) during the school’s founding decade, from 1998 to 2008. Once reinstated, both BAWCC and our school will work together to create a sustainable funding structure for the position and to further build school-wide mental health, and academic programs to specifically address the unique needs of students living in trauma.

We plan to staff the ERACE advocate position with a pediatrician who has a long standing relationship to our school and who also has a Masters Degree in Public Health. She spent a year as the original on-site pediatrician shortly after the school opened and continued her connection to the neighborhood during 12 years as a primary care faculty pediatrician at UCSF/Mt. Zion. She has experience working with underserved families and an understanding of the medical and emotional effects of untreated trauma. As the ERACE Advocate, she will connect our focal group students and their families with social and mental health services outside of the school. The role of the advocate will be to serve as an approachable outreach coordinator who will further the school’s work in establishing relationships with community based organizations that can provide needed support to the students living in trauma. Through effective service coordination, the ERACE Advocate will help ensure these students can take full advantage of the school’s tiered services and educational program.

#### Alignment with SFUSD Strategic Plan

Our proposed strategy aligns with and supports the school district’s strategic plan, including the Six Strategies for Success and Vision 2025 Essentials. Examples of this alignment follow.

\* The ERACE Advocate strategy stems from our work on DISTRICT STRATEGY #1: Implement the SFUSD Core Curriculum and use student data to make informed decisions and monitor progress towards goals.

Our school fully implements the SFUSD Common Core State Standards math curriculum and the Teacher’s College Reading and Writing Workshop Model as part of the Comprehensive Approach to Literacy—and uses data to monitor our students’ progress. In monitoring our students’ progress toward literacy goals, we noted that students were advancing reading levels at inconsistent rates, leading us to conclude that some students require a more systematic and targeted approach, and to understand the effects of attendance on performance. For example, one of our school’s lowest performing subgroups is our African American subgroup. As we delved into our attendance data we noted that while 19% of our students were chronically absent school-wide, 38% of our African American students were identified as chronically absent and in supporting families we noted that these students were also experiencing extraordinarily high adversity in their lives.

Our school was in a particularly solid position to build a cohesive Tier 2 academic reading support system, as a subsection of teachers at the school were among the first in the district to be trained in the Writing Workshop Model and are known throughout the district as teacher leaders who employ model practices. In response to the data, these teachers, the principal and other team members: 1) developed and trained (through Fountas & Pinnell Institute for Struggling Readers) a site-based literacy team; launched a Tier 2 Academic Response to Intervention Facilitator reading support program to provide daily guided reading instruction for 35 students in a push-in model; and, from within our own school ranks, hired a senior teacher to serve as literacy coach to implement the guided reading program with our teachers and students to also ensure quality Tier 1 instruction every day in every classroom.

The Literacy Coach had great success implementing the Writing Workshop Model, including gaining experience using the model with students in our focal group. However, in working with the focal group students, the Literacy Coach observed that the students who did show improvement in reading required extraordinary scaffolding and support from the Literacy Coach to be successful. This level of effort is not sustainable over time, if we are to effectively teach and support all students.

If funded, the ERACE Advocate will work to create a more stable school environment in which a comprehensive system is developed to address the unique learning needs of students living in trauma.

\* The ERACE Advocate strategy advances DISTRICT STRATEGY #2: Provide tiered levels of academic and behavior support to all students using a Response to Instruction and Intervention

(RTI) model; and advances DISTRICT STRATEGY #4: Differentiate central office supports to schools through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports.

Consistent Tier 1 instruction in English Language Arts, Mathematics and Behavior is a cornerstone of the success of every school, and is our goal at our school. In the area of English Language Arts, in addition to purchasing a leveled A-Z Guided Reading library for the school's Guided Reading program, the school is providing technology-enhanced reading supports through two Common Core State Standards-based programs. One program is Myon, which provides an alternative and highly engaging reading option for students experiencing attention difficulties during independent reading time. Myon offers excellent reading selections for students and monitors students' reading progress, lexile level and time on task. In the area of Mathematics, the school is implementing the Common Core State Standards math curriculum with the intent to incorporate the technology- and standards-based Study Island program mid-year. This resource provides students with SBAC-styled questions in an online format to reinforce classroom learning and introduce and teach 21st century computer skills. Both of these academic supports have the potential to accelerate and reinforce learning among students in our focal group and are being implemented this year.

However, data from 2014-2-15 indicates that 19.3% (N=70) of our students—the focal group—continued to be identified as chronically absent at the end of 2015. Pending funding, the ERACE Advocate's work to coordinate services that stabilize their trauma will be designed toward achieving increases in student attendance and instructional time—and more opportunities for these students to access and learn via these language/literacy and math supports.

In the area of Behavior Support, and beginning in fall 2014, the school developed a comprehensive Tier 1 and Tier 2 Positive Behavior Support System that recognizes students for being safe, respectful and responsible. Prizes and promotion through Lion Tickets, Lion Ticket Prize Drawings, monthly Spirit assemblies, and events build awareness and enthusiasm throughout the school. Classroom delivery of the Second Step social-emotional learning curriculum (SEL), and school-wide implementation of Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success (which recognizes students for hard work and 14 character other traits), teach and reinforce skills and positive behaviors across all grades. A fully operational Behavior Leadership Team has great enthusiasm and wherewithal to deepen the school-wide SEL culture and climate, and meets monthly to anticipate, monitor, and respond to our students' behavioral needs through Tier 1 supports.

In addition, the school established a Student Assistance Program (SAP) consisting of teachers, administrators, and support staff. The SAP team meets weekly to review the history and behavioral and academic data of referred students, plan Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions for students and classrooms, monitor for response to intervention, and potentially provide referrals to additional Tier 2 and/or higher levels of service (e.g. Student Success Team, Individual or Group Counseling, Mentoring, Behavioral Contract, etc.) These meetings have been instrumental in helping our school identify, monitor, intervene, and plan for more sustainable approaches to address our students' challenges.

Recently, and in parallel to these efforts, the school's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) were increased by the District Office. The Literacy Coach and Academic Response to Instruction Facilitator positions were both increased to 1.0 FTE positions from 0.5 FTE. The school also received a 0.5 FTE Family Liaison on MTSS, which the school supplements to bring up to a 0.8 FTE position. MTSS also funds a 1.0 FTE school Social Worker. In addition, the District's funding of a security guard and security system have helped to secure the campus and have been recognized and appreciated by parents, community partners, students, and staff. Among the security guard's roles is to escort homeless and/or inebriated vagrants off the campus—a task previously handled by staff, administrators, and teachers.

Our Social Worker's goals and activities include:

- Strengthening our school's socio-emotional learning climate;
- Fully implementing positive behavior supports school-wide;
- Improving the fidelity and effectiveness of Tier 1 & 2 interventions
- Increasing support and coordination for our Student Assistance Program (SAP) process
- Coordinating Tier 2 school-based services
- Providing classroom lessons, support groups and other Tier I and Tier 2 services

However, our Social Worker's time is largely spent supporting the families facing extraordinary trauma, and trying to coordinate services for the students who are having great difficulty at school while their families are also in crisis. Addressing their multiple needs requires connecting these children and their families to an array of community-based nonprofit organizations that specialize in helping children and families manage psycho-social and behavioral indications,

access basic resources—such as food, housing, health and mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and employment—and build resiliency. It is not unusual for our social worker, as well as our school administrators, to be involved with helping families coordinate mental health, medical, and other supportive appointments and services to support the student to thrive in school. The social worker and administrators often call Child Protective Services, case-workers, Child Crisis, court-appointed advocates and other counselors or mental health professionals to ensure the well-being of focal group students.

We are confident that the performance of all K-5th grade students will rise as we deepen our Tier 1 and Tier 2 school-wide academic and behavioral practices. Our social worker is trained to provide those Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports—such as support groups and classroom lessons that can reach hundreds of students across all grade levels. But the intensity, administrative complexity, and time required to support even one student in trauma leaves little time to support students who can benefit from intervention but are not in crisis. Hundreds of students who could benefit from Tier 1 and 2 supports, wait in the wings.

While this year the MTSS support provided by the District Office has brought our school a step closer to providing adequate academic and SEL support for all students, our students are highly impacted by trauma and school administration, staff and community partners agree that a different approach is needed to support their success.

Pending funding, the ERACE Advocate will address this gap, taking up the challenge of coordinating services for our focal group students which, in turn, will make it possible for the social worker to meet the goal of providing and coordinating vital Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports for hundreds more students.

\* The ERACE Advocate strategy advances DISTRICT STRATEGY #3: Build a clear vision, culture, and conditions for college and career readiness; as well as DISTRICT STRATEGY #6: Increase awareness and build the supports to fully implement SFUSD's Family Engagement Standards.

As emphasized above, our school provides tiered supports and holds students to high standards. However, many of our families are not familiar with the American educational system and have not had positive experiences with this system.

Starting in the fall of 2014, and recognizing these barriers, the school took several steps to strengthen the vision, culture, and conditions for our students' college and career readiness. For example, the principal began convening monthly Principal's Chats to inform parents about school events and discuss ways that parents can help their children with their homework and succeed in school generally. The school regularly convened its English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC), in addition to the already operational School Site Council (SSC), bringing together a cross-section of teachers, staff, parents, and partners along with the principal to discuss relevant performance data and its implications for the school's role in removing barriers to post-secondary options. And, to ensure parents' access to information, the school also started providing regular translation in Spanish, Arabic and Vietnamese at these meetings. These forums and the caliber of dialogue among our stakeholders are important factors in strengthening our culture and conditions—and they are leading us to adopt and propose solutions to specific challenges.

For example, as an outcome of a School Site Council discussion, we engaged the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) to help demystify the K-12 educational system for our students' parents and equip these parents with best practices related to homework, self-esteem, and preparing students for success in middle and high school. PIQE helps parents understand the basics that middle class parents have access to such as understanding report cards and the types of questions they should be asking about their children's progress at parent teacher conferences. PIQE empowers parents by helping them understand how to engage the support of the principal when needed, and what services are available at the school to support their child's social and emotional growth.

At our school, PIQE is an outgrowth of the discussions our community has been having about ways to remove barriers and promote culture and conditions for college and career readiness. We are thrilled that after an extensive outreach campaign by both site and PIQE staff, approximately 30 parents committed to regular attendance in the nine-week course. However, the parents of our focal group students—those dealing with chronic and severe trauma—did not sign up to participate. PIQE is effectively serving those families whose basic needs—for safety, housing, mental and physical health, employment, are already being met. But families living in trauma have not been able to avail themselves of this level of support.

If funded, the ERACE Advocate will work to stabilize some of the circumstances that are currently preventing the parents of our focal group students from accessing the PIQE opportunity and help parents create conditions that support their children's learning.

\*Finally, the ERACE Advocate strategy advances DISTRICT STRATEGY #5: Recruit, develop and retain highly qualified teachers, leaders and staff

Our school seeks to retain highly qualified teachers and staff who hold access and equity, achievement, and accountability sacred to their practice. We provide ongoing professional development to develop teachers' effective practices in the areas of Guided Reading, English Language Development, Readers and Writers Workshop as well as the new rigorous math standards. Teachers are empowered with leadership opportunities to develop their practice and collaborate with colleagues in ways that address student success.

Although our school has experienced a higher than normal turnover rate of teachers in the past two years (29%), currently, the school is attracting and keeping highly effective teachers who bring and/or who are developing special skills to serve all students and families, including those living in profoundly traumatic circumstances.

As mentioned earlier, if funded, we propose hiring for the ERACE Advocate position, a pediatrician with a long-standing relationship to our school, experience working with families in this community and who brings specialized knowledge about the long-term medical and emotional effects of untreated trauma.

\*The ERACE Advocate strategy also help our school advance the Vision 2025 Essentials—particularly in promoting the role of parents as partners and advocates for their children, in positioning our school as a hub of community life for all families, and in ensuring that our school is truly equitable in supporting all students' learning, including those experiencing trauma that can be stabilized with the support of coordinated tailored services.

- 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.

Our primary desired outcome is to retain the students from our focal group in the general education program—and by addressing their trauma, prevent the circumstances which unresolved may lead to academic discrepancies that would result in a future referral special education.

In addition, from the perspective of the District's strategic plan, our proposed strategy has the potential to incrementally advance multiple District goals in a 12-month period, such as:

- Increase the percentage of 4th grade students meeting standards in English Language Arts.
  - Meet School Quality Index Improvement goals for African American, Latino and English Learner students.
  - Reduce Special Education Disproportion referral for African American students.
  - Increase percentage of students in grades 3 – 5 who meet or exceed standards on the SBAC in English Language Arts and Math.
  - Reduce the percentage of chronic absenteeism of all students, especially focal group students.
  - Increase the number of students who agree and strongly agree that they always feel safe at school.
  - Increase the number of parents who agree and strongly agree that they attended and actively participated in regularly scheduled meetings, events, and adult educational opportunities.
  - Increase the number of parents who agree and strongly agree that families are informed, included, and involved as partners and decision makers in the education of our children.
- 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?

#### Hire Eradicate and Reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences (ERACE) Advocate

Based upon the completion of the administration of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) screening tool and identification of families living in trauma, have the ERACE Advocate connect families and children with intervention services, and coordinate these services. In addition, referrals for ERACE Advocate services will include students who have not responded to comprehensive Tier 2 interventions due to living with toxic trauma.

Provide at least one additional professional development opportunity (August 2016) for ALL staff to increase awareness of trauma informed practices, and allow time for key staff to visit and learn from programs providing school-based trauma services for students and families. Revisit the topic of school-wide trauma informed practices at all relevant meetings.

ERACE Advocate further develops partnerships with community based organizations that will provide trauma counseling, support and related services.

Enlist the school's partner organization, the Bay Area Women's and Children's Center, to support the ERACE Advocate by connecting our school's parents with information about the available community services and also connecting the Advocate with regularly scheduled outreach events, so that parents also become comfortable reaching out on their own.

Enlist our school's Principal and staff to provide resources and vital information to support the ERACE Advocate's work with students impacted by trauma.

Begin exploratory work to provide a counseling enhanced classroom/s to provide short-term intensive academic and emotional support, while connecting students with outside trauma services to ERACE trauma in their lives create the stabilizing services to help them thrive in school.

- 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