

APPLICATION: John Muir Elementary

Describe the critical challenge you would like to tackle in a different way.

Through this work, we hope to increase the academic achievement of our target subgroup (African American students) in both English Language Arts and Mathematics.

At the end of the 2014-2015 school year, 60 percent of our African American students (3rd-5th grade) read at or above grade level reading benchmarks, as measured by the Fountas & Pinnell assessment. This is more than twice the district average for 3rd-5th grade African American students.

Conversely, only 6 percent of our African American students performed at or above standard for ELA as measured by the SBAC. This is significantly less than the district average for African American students of 18%. The results for math were similar (10% proficient), although not quite as far below the district average for African American students- still a very low percentage nonetheless.

We believe that providing more opportunities for our teachers and staff to explore the connections between race, poverty, and trauma will help better inform our teaching practices and the lens with which we view our African American children.

African American students at X School spend less time, on average, in class than our other subgroups. Reasons for this include chronic absences or tardiness (47.5% of our African American students were identified as "chronically absent" in the 2014-15 school year according to district measures) and out of class referrals for behavioral issues. We hope by creating opportunities for teacher and support staff to explore race, trauma, implicit bias and other related topics, that we will see an increase in rigor and cultural awareness which will lead to engagement and academic and more time spent on-task in class. In addition, we also hope that by understanding and connecting more with our students' families and the community, we will increase our ability to encourage and support higher rates of attendance for this subgroup.

Another underserved subgroup that we hope to better serve is our Family and Youth in Transition (FYT) (more than half of which are African American). Currently, at least 20 percent of X School students are in transition and do not have predictable or permanent housing (this only includes students who have been identified as FYT, in reality even more of students would fit into this subgroup). These students often come and go at X School, so we have a fluctuating population that we're working diligently to catch up academically while they're with us at X School. They often come with various levels of trauma that manifests itself in different ways. By providing time for teacher to explore these families' situations, their strengths and struggles, we hope to better serve them.

What outcome(s) or change(s) would you like your design to achieve at your school site?

Our project aims to improve the social and academic experiences of our African American students. We will provide X School's staff with regular opportunities to engage in conversations and reflection around race and culture, stereotype threat and implicit bias, trauma informed practices and learn more about culturally and linguistically responsive strategies. We will also provide opportunities for teachers to engage with target families in order to build stronger relationships.

Our strategy will be to support the X School staff in becoming more culturally and linguistically responsive educators by engaging in regular conversations around race and equity. This will help our teachers shift the lens through which they look at their students and families while building capacity for collaboration to improve learning outcomes for our African American students.

If this problem didn't exist, our African American students would be performing on par with their white counterparts. Families would have stronger relationships with our teachers which would create a Safe, Kind and Responsible climate. We also would be able to retain more of our teaching staff year to year because they feel empowered to work with our children and families.

Many of our families have experienced extreme trauma and live in poverty, which may be a cause for many instances of physical aggression on campus. Trauma in students can affect brain development which can sometimes lead to fight or flight response to stimuli. If our staff was to better understand how trauma manifest itself and learn more strategies to combat the affects, we could a much more responsive school.

How have you engaged your school to identify your critical challenge?

X School teachers has requested that we continue from last year equity and trauma informed professional developments in order to build stronger relationships with families. X School has worked very hard to set high expectations for learning for our African American and Latino children which reflected in our language arts data. We have engaged in data discourse in all areas including office referrals.

X School has a very dedicated staff of teachers and support staff that are very passionate about closing the opportunity gap and forming strong bonds with families and students. Our leadership team consists of one teacher from each grade level, a special education teacher, IRF, Literacy Coach and Principal. We meet biweekly to plan our professional development cycles. The leadership team framed all our professional development cycles under the umbrella of equity and culturally responsive strategies. We have identified our critical challenge this year as the raising the Academic levels of our African American children and connecting with families more.

We also have a CARE Team that meets weekly for 1.5 hours to identify Tier 2 and 3 students and ensure that Tier one is being implemented with fidelity. This team consists of the parent Liaison, Social Worker, 2 RSP teachers, School Psychologist, Speech Therapist, After School Supervisor School Nurse and the Principal.

We also have a X School Family Engagement Team that consists of the Family Liaison, Family and Community Outreach Coordinator, a Parent Leadership Group (10-15 members) and the Principal. The FE team meets weekly to plan, implement, and coordinate efforts with the goal of improving and building family engagement. This team has identified a multi-leveled tier system of support X School Families.

These teams all have the same goal of raising the academic and social success of our African American students.

What solutions have you tried or considered to address this challenge so far?

At the end of last year, X School began to participate in equity conversations led by an outside consultant. All our teachers and support staff have expressed interest in continuing this process. The principal has led one Equity conversation with staff using the book *Courageous Conversations* as a means to norm language around race and equity.

Our staff has worked very hard to disaggregate the data in order to get to the root cause. With this data, we have chosen African American focal students in order to measure how they are growing academically and socially (i.e. Student Survey's/ Running Record Data). As mentioned above, our African American students performed above the district in running record scores but under performed the District in the Smarter Balanced Assessment. We believe this discrepancy may be in not setting rigorous enough expectations for this group of students compounded with the chronic absences and behavioral issues in class.

X School has also implemented a multilevel Tiered support system for our students. Classroom and Common Area expectations are posted in all classrooms (Safe, Kind and Responsible) and SKR tickets are handed out daily with a weekly raffle. We also recognize students for SKR behaviors in our Monday weekly circle. Second Step and Restorative Circle are being implemented weekly in all classes. 5:1 and greeting students at the door is our focus for the opening of the school year and we are slowly introducing the 16 Proactive Strategies every few weeks. Three teachers and the Principal are attending PBIS trainings lead by Dr. Horner.

We implemented a Tiered Fidelity Index and found that the majority of students understand the school rules and most teachers are using the SKR tickets to reinforce positive behaviors.

We initiated our first monthly "Cafe Meeting" to receive feedback from families last week. 27 family members attended and their feedback is being shared with the teachers in order to respond to families' concerns. The majority of families shared that they were very happy with X School, felt safe here and were happy with the academic progress of their children. They shared concern that not enough families were engaged with supporting X School.

How is this challenge an equity dilemma, one that is interfering with your school's ability to ensure that all of your students will thrive?

Though our staff is very hard working and deeply cares about the success of our students and families, there is not a deep level of understanding of how trauma and racial inequities affect our families. Almost 90% of our students qualify for free lunch and we have around 50 homeless children. The majority of these children are living in poverty conditions and may be exposed to trauma-like conditions. As noted above, a high percentage of our African American students receive a high number of office referral forms and have chronic absences. The effects of trauma and a loss of classroom time directly impacts the academic success of these children. Our teachers need more tools in order to combat these challenges in order to close the opportunity gap.

By understanding the factors that impede the success of our African American students, we can better leverage the essential shifts of Vision 2025. For example, X School can better build a clearer vision and culture of what it truly means to prepare our African American students for career and college readiness. In the same breath, we can better build the relational trust it takes to keep families and teachers engaged in working together for our students.

Who is on your design team? (the more diverse the better)

Our Team will Consist of these Folks:

Principal

Instructional Reform Facilitator

Technology Teacher

Parent Liaison

After School Program Community Outreach Coordinator

How will you make sure your team will commit the time needed to succeed?

X School has a very dedicated staff of teachers and support staff that are very dedicated to closing the opportunity gap and forming strong bonds with families and students. The staff has currently agreed to use Prop A hours to extend our staff meetings to receive professional developments. The team is fully committed to attend the meetings.