

## APPLICATION: Marshall Elementary

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

There are a myriad of challenges facing schools in the 21st Century, especially for those that serve the most in need. Schools like X School confront high poverty rates, high percentage of newly arrived immigrants, limited English proficiency at home, neighborhood and domestic violence, limited access to technology at the home, the challenges at times seems endless. However, schools must confront these challenges daily, hopefully strategically aligning resources to address highest identified needs, and implementing instructional practices and programs to close the achievement and opportunity gap our students and families. Though X School has experienced some successes, we are still failing to provide the highest quality education for our students and families as the demands of the 21st century economy requires of them. As a school learning community it is always difficult to choose the correct initiative to address the wide array of challenges, however there is one over arching challenge which is the most critical: How does X School provide a 21st Century educational experience with 20th Century instructional practices, classroom resources and professional development?

While schools throughout the district face the same challenge, the issue is more acute to X School based on the population we serve. Based on the latest demographic data makes this challenge clear:

Race & Ethnicity:

84% Latino/Hispanic

9% White

7% Other

Socio-Economically Disadvantaged:

70%

Primary Language:

78% Spanish

20% English

2% Other

In a school-based survey conducted in 2014-2015, only 40% of families have consistent Internet access at home, and only 30% have desktop/laptop computer available for the children at home. X School's families are connected technologically with iPads and Smartphones, but these are usually used for entertainment purposes, not educational. Based on the family data, a vast majority face contextual factors that are a barrier for them to have access to the new economy and opportunities to build social/educational capital to assist them through their educational path to college and career readiness and life opportunities.

The above data clearly indicates that X School is critical in providing the foundation for students and families to have access to the 21st Century skills that are necessary for success. One of X School's strengths, teacher experience, has in some ways been a barrier to the systematic and pedagogical shifts required to close the opportunity gap faced by our students and families. The average years for teachers and support staff (Literacy Coach, ARTIF, STEM) is 14.5, which in many ways is an asset, but it also means that a majority of staff have been trained in 20th Century pedagogical theories, implementing out dated instructional practices and resources. Through no fault of their own, our teachers fall back into common past practices that were successful for their students in 1990's, but do not meet the challenges of today's educational demands to meet the challenges of 21st Century learning. It is time for X School teachers to re-imagined their classroom as learning labs for students to engage in learning opportunities that deeply connect to the knowledge base economy of the 21st Century.

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

The outcomes our design team hope to achieve is to replicate school wide the successes of our current 5th grade English Language Arts and Science classroom. Mr. Gerry Gomez over the past 3 years at X School has transformed his classroom from a

teacher centered, direct instruction mode of education to a student centered, inquiry-based, critical thinking rigorous learning environment. This is evident by the most recent data. 66% of X School 's 5th Grade students on the 2015-2015 English Language Arts CAASPP met or exceeded standard, while in comparison the SFUSD 5th grade percentage was 56%. Though at first glance this does appear to be statistically significant when comparing all students, however, once the data is disaggregated by X School's historically underserved sub-group (Economically Disadvantaged Hispanic/Latino) his instructional program's impact is pronounced. Of this sub-group, 56% of his students met or exceeded standard, while only 26% of all SFUSD students in similar sub-group scored at or above standard. Similar results are found in the 2014-2015 CST Science Results as well. 59% of all X School 5th graders scored proficient or above, while SFUSD scored at 62%. But again, when comparing similar sub-group, Mr. Gomez students outperform the district (43% vs. 28%).

Though Mr. Gomez is an outstanding educator, dedicated to improving the outcomes for his students, he has had resources, both material and professional development, which other teachers at X School have not. At the end of the 2013-2014 school year X School was awarded one SmartBoard by SFUSD Pupil Services Department for piloting the new CORE Waiver Student Survey. Because of Mr. Gomez experience and willingness to incorporate technology into his daily practice, his was the logical choice to install this new instructional device. Additionally, for the past two years he has participated in in numerous 21st Century learning opportunities, some district offered, some not, that aligned to the challenges faced by the new Common Core Standards. Academic Conversations, Comprehensive Approach Literacy, SFUSD Humanities Teacher Leadership are among the professional development opportunities he has participated in, plus given the release time to observe and collaborate with fellow educators in the district. His classroom is a place where students are engaged in real-world problem solving, participate in multi-media instructional lessons, incorporating into his weekly lessons both the Smartboard and Chromebooks so that students can connect and access a wide array of information that the traditional classroom cannot. This is the instructional model

that X School wishes to replicate school wide, but historically has not have the instructional capacity or the financial resources. If all of our classrooms had similar technology in their classrooms, but more importantly the professional development and instructional opportunities to engage in developing as 21st Century teachers, his successes will be commonly shared in each and every classroom throughout the school.

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

X School has engaged the entire school community in this challenge. From the PTA to the ILT, we have acknowledged that we need an instructional shift to address the needs of our students, and to prepare our children for the demands of being a successful global citizen. As a Spanish Immersion school, we understand that bilingualism opens doors linguistically and culturally, but that is only a part. Our students need to be critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and curious about the world around them. This year our SSC and ILT recommended X School allocate funds to create a full time STEM position. This position will be a critical in the design process, implementation, and leading professional development opportunities

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

In 2013-2014 X School was awarded QTEA Impact Award for \$15,000. X School ILT decided that teachers were lacking in classroom technology and that this would be the best allocation for the award. Each teacher received a new laptop, LCD projector, document camera, and Audio Visual cart. Though the teachers were more than capable of using their new laptop for emails, creating word documents and power points, they did not have the appropriate experience and professional development opportunities to fully incorporate the technology into their daily practice. We learned as a site that no new resource, program, or technology is useful until teachers and support staff have extensive and appropriate professional development to understand how to use it to improve their practice, and eventually increase the academic success of every student in their class.

The analogy is similar to giving a person a plot of land and the tools to farm. They have the material and resources to grow food, but without any formal training and education on how to cultivate and fertilize the soil and what plants will grow in the climate, the plot will bear little, no matter how much work and good intentions the farmer will be disappointed with the outcome. The same holds true in education. We can give teachers all the resources and materials they may need, but without the appropriate professional training and hands-on experience, the change efforts will bear little fruit.

**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?**

As the data indicates, the majority of students and families at X School are the underserved. On a daily basis, our staff members have equity at the center of their practice, and struggle with providing an educational experience that will disrupt the power of demographics. However, we still experience an opportunity gap that is persistent as evident by multiple accountability measures. The recent Smarter Balance Assessments Scores bare the inconvenient truth. The eight white students in grades 3rd-5th who took the test all scored at standard or above in English Language Arts, while our Economically Disadvantaged Hispanic/Latino was 43%. In comparison with similar equity trends in SFUSD the gap is replicated, with White students in grades 3-5 scoring at 77% proficiency and Economically Disadvantaged Hispanic Latino Students with 22%at or above grade level proficiency. X School is outperforming the district with both sub-groups, but we are still struggling with the equity dilemma of creating a truly equitable outcome for all students.

As is evident by most recent data, X School has leveraged our Multi-Tier Level of Support to maximize student outcomes in comparison to similar demographics in the district. X School has dedicated funds for class size reduction in grades 4-5 to ensure a more personalized relationship between student and teacher, allocated site funds

for an Academic Response to Intervention Facilitator, and created a STEM position to ensure that we have the human capital to provide the holistic approach to each students' academic experience.

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

X School's design team is a diverse group of educators who are dedicated to be change agents at the site. They represent classroom teachers, support staff, and parents. It will consist of veteran educators who have extensive experience in the classroom, as well as wisdom of past state, district, and site reform efforts, both successful and not, along relatively young professionals eager to engage in transforming X School into the 21st Century educational institution that continues to be an exemplar school serving the students and families in the Mission District.

**X School Design Team:**

Principal

Academic RTI Facilitator

2nd Grade Teacher

5th Grade ELA/Science Teacher

STEM Teacher

Family Liaison/Parent

Parent, who is current Vice president of Education Strategy and Director, Center for Childhood Creativity

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

The design team was selected based upon their commitment to transform X School into a 21st Century Learning School. This is a group of proven individuals to be dedicated members of community, serving on various leadership committees over the years. Each of them expressed a willingness to engage in the work, and aware of the time commitment they are embarking upon if we are chosen. I am confident that we will be able to sustain our energy and focus during the design process, plus as

we engage in the learning process, I will make sure that the process is also a fun experience by all stakeholders. We understand the work will be difficult, time consuming, and at times frustrating, but if we commit to our established school vision and group norms, X School's Design Team will be successful because students have, and will also be at the center of our work!