

QTEA Impact Award Application - 2016

Application # Grattan

Describe your strategy(ies), project(s) and/or practice(s). 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 school has a long and rich history of providing support to students in our Special Day Classrooms (SDC) to ensure they are included and embraced by their general education peers. As the district has made great strides towards ensuring all students who require special education are placed in the least restrictive environment, our school has endeavored to become a model for inclusive practices that positively impacts all of our students, and helps build community and common purpose across all of our differences. Through a combination of professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals, the purchase of sensory appropriate tools and play equipment, and the continued practice of integrated drama, we intend to create rich classroom and playground environments in which our students can thrive and our staff can model best practices.

Our focal student groups continue to be those who are receiving special education services in SDC and general education placements, and their general education peers. While we have had the opportunity to start putting to practice the various trainings and strategies that have been acquired through professional development opportunities such as Stetson, TASH, Social Thinking and Second Step, we have realized that there are areas that prior grant funding has not specifically addressed. This includes focusing on the important role of paraprofessionals in the classroom and playground setting, and ensuring that opportunities for professional development are also afforded to them. Additionally, we seek to draw upon the learnings from our Integrated Drama to continue to strengthen the connection between our SDC students and their general education peers.

Our school is uniquely positioned to continue to dive deeper into our work around inclusive practices given the continuity of focus and effort coming from a variety of aspects of our school community. For example, one teacher has been our SDC grades 3-5 teacher for the past 4 years and a model for Rethink Autism in the classroom. Many of our paraprofessionals return year after year to provide solid support to our students and teaching staff. Our school speech therapist and our Resource Specialist Program teacher have been a consistent presence in the lives of our students since 2010 and 2011, respectively. Since 2012, the school's Inclusion Committee, comprised of

families, general education teachers and SDC teachers, has worked tirelessly to ensure inclusion is practiced and considered in all of the work we do as a community. We also benefit from new perspectives as well, with the addition of the principal of our school, and our SDC K-2 classroom teacher.

Our efforts align with SFUSD's Six Strategies for Success and Vision 2025 in meaningful ways. We would like to highlight the following from the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan regarding Strategies in Action for the Classroom:

Agency, Authority and Identity: Creating meaningful space in the classroom and the playground as well as using integrated drama to allow our students to explore their feelings within and for each other will help to support their social emotional growth.

Access to Content: Through a combination of paraprofessional and teacher training, and the implementation of strategies taken from the Second Step and Social Thinking social emotional curricula, students will have the tools necessary to participate in their learning in a meaningful way.

Safe and Supportive Learning Climate: Working in collaboration with our special education and general education staff, we will explore how to best to build a model classroom for inclusion. We will draw upon the latest research, best practices and trainings to ensure we continually adapt our physical spaces to address the needs of our students.

Family School Partnerships: Through the strengthening of our inclusion committee and celebrating together at events and performances, we plan to deepen our connections between families, staff and students.

This grant will support our efforts in going deeper in the environments where general education and special education students are interacting. This QTEA grant will allow us to fund the following:

Professional Development: Professional development for paraprofessionals is just as vital as it is for our teachers. Important work to address the needs of our SDC and inclusion students is typically done in small group settings with resource specialists or speech therapists. Paraprofessionals can help our students take those learnings and help apply them across different settings, whether it's in larger groups in the classroom or on the playground. Helping students generalize the skills they acquire in small group settings into more "real world" settings will be critical for their academic and social success. To ensure consistency in training, we plan to dedicate funds for both paraprofessionals and general education teachers who have students with IEPs in their classroom to attend trainings including Social Thinking.

Integrated Drama Groups: StageWrite's ADAPTS program (Autism & Drama with

Artists, Parents, Teachers, & Students) will engage students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) through integrated theatre residencies with general education students to engage ALL students through the theatre arts and enhance our entire school community's awareness and appreciation of neurodiversity. Drama can help both children with ASD and their typically developing peers to interact and build genuine interpersonal connections across their difference, enhancing their sense of identity as part of the larger community. We seek to encourage the creative lives of children whose self-expression is hindered by their developmental differences. Furthermore, students with ASD (many of whom are non-verbal) are left outside of the conversations, activities and educational opportunities of their neuro-typical peers. Theatre is the perfect way to try to level the playing field so that all partners enter the dramatic activities as new players working together on creative challenges. In developing a program that honors the differences these students bring to the classroom, typically developing students are put in a place of having to learn how to communicate and partner with someone so seemingly different to themselves and the way they interact in the world. Building off of the research and theories of Dr. Wolfberg's Playgroup model and Steve Silberman's NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity, StageWrite will facilitate the next phase of our integrated drama project spanning two semesters across multiple classroom environments, and culminating in a community performance celebrating and highlighting the unique gifts our students with autism bring to the community. The deepening of this partnership with StageWrite will include creating a new customized curriculum in partnership with teachers, consultants from the field, and professional development for faculty and staff. The project will include drama residencies with one to one student partnerships comprised of students from Special Day Classrooms paired with a neurotypical peer from the general education setting. The 10 week residency will use interactive drama games to explore a story and themes of interest to the teachers and school community, and build relationships through play. The residencies will culminate in an interactive play-based experience integrating staff and teachers, student pairs, and their families through a drama based interactive performance to bring us all together in play to celebrate student success. Events like these build bridges across difference among cohorts in our community that rarely have the opportunity to interact meaningfully due to the unique constraints of being a parent of a child with autism. Opportunities for mainstreaming, reverse mainstreaming, and peer to peer relationship building will all be critical elements of this phase of the project. We will continue to develop, re-evaluate, and improve this program based on learnings from last year's work. Teachers and artists will collaborate in the creation of an assessment tool to guide the evaluation of student and school community progress. The project will culminate in a theatrical experience for the community that celebrates this unique collaboration of artists, teachers, students and

families.

Playground and Classroom Sensory Tools and Toys: We take a holistic view on building the classroom and playground. Structures at recess need to be set up in a meaningful way.

Facilitated Play: Through collaboration with our special education teachers and consultants, we plan to train our paraprofessional and recess monitor staff to facilitate play during recess.

Mainstreaming: It is important for our general education classrooms to hold space for our SDC students to foster academic and social relationships with their general education peers. Collaboration among teachers and students, along with the support of properly trained paraprofessionals will allow reverse mainstreaming to be a regular and important aspect of the student experience.

What outcome(s) or change(s) do you believe this project or practice will have at your school site?

Well conceived and thoughtful classroom and playground environments where students can engage in academics and social interactions in meaningful way

Extra planning time for teachers and paraprofessionals to discuss classroom management, behavior, teaching and support strategies and student goals.

More spontaneous social interactions between our general ed students and students with special needs.

More facilitation of the targeted skills through play with the support of our trained paraprofessionals.

Data will be generated through qualitative data collection on social interactions between students with special needs and their general education peers both in structured and unstructured settings and with varying levels of adult support. In addition, anecdotal observations and feedback of general education and SDC teachers pre and post drama residency will be collected.

In addition to your action plan, who are the key stakeholders who would be impacted by this proposal?

Students & families in our special education programs

Teachers and staff (General Education teachers, Special Day Class teachers, Speech and Language teachers and intern, paraprofessional staff, noontime monitors, parent volunteers)

All General Education students

Community partners engaged in the project

As part of your application, you'll send a detailed budget set-up form. What is your anticipated budget for implementation?

\$26,000

Has your UBC reviewed this application and do they support it?

Yes

Describe how educators were included in the development and/or writing of this submission. In your description, please confirm that the final version of your submission is supported by the Union Building Committee OR, in the case where the school does not have a UBC, then supported by a majority of teachers and/or paraprofessionals who will be implementing the proposed work."

In the spirit of inclusion, our school has always worked with all stakeholders to ensure that proposals such as these are not created in a vacuum. Through our Inclusion Committee, SpEd Leadership team meetings, School Site Council and faculty meetings, we have sought to maintain an ongoing dialogue around needs and supports. We confirm that our final version of our QTEA grant submission has support by the UBC as well as those who will be implementing the work.