

## QTEA Innovation Award Application - 2016

### Application # 7

**School Name:** Dr. George Washington Carver Academic Elementary School

**School Org Number:** 625

**Principal Name:** Emmanuel Stewart

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**Person submitting grant:** Danielle Farmer

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### Describe the equity challenge or opportunity you would like to tackle in a different way.

African American young males are facing a multitude of defining challenges within the area of education today. According to the Schott Foundation's 50-State Report on Public Education and Black Males, African American males are three times more likely to be expelled or suspended from school than white males. While their peers receive essential instruction in core subject areas, the black males in this statistic fall further behind and are unable to develop solid educational foundations. With unstable academic foundations, students struggle to succeed on the rigorous state assessments that are used to make crucial decisions. Analysis from the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation showed that roughly 18% of African American fourth graders were proficient on the reading sections of the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress and 19% on the math portion; whereas, the national proficiency average in fourth grade reading was 36% and 40% on math. Further time outside of the classroom can continue to make life-defining impacts on students. For instance, African American males had a 59% graduation rate compared to 80% for White males in the 2012-2013 school year. This substantial gap translates into a ripple effect, affecting aspects of their adult life and perpetuating systemic problems. Researchers at the Economic Policy Institute utilized recent Census data to find that the unemployment rate among African Americans with no high school diploma was a drastic 16.6%. Furthermore, wages for adults without a high school diploma have been found to be substantially lower than those with a diploma or higher education. Not only can missed instruction lead to low graduation rates, high unemployment rates, and poverty-level wages, it can also lead to actions resulting in jail sentences. The Sentencing Project's Report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (2013) found that Black males were six times more likely to be incarcerated than White males. The loss of quality instructional time in the classroom not only impacts students immediate academic outcomes, but can dramatically affect life trajectories.

The trends that impact African American males in the education system on a national level are also present on a district and school wide scale. According to 2012 data, while African American students made up only 10.8% of the student population within San Francisco Unified School District, they comprised 55% of all elementary school suspensions (SFUSD Pupil Services, 2013). As a result, African American students received on average 5 less days of instruction than their counterparts (SFUSD Pupil Services, 2013). At Dr. George Washington Carver Elementary School, the 2015-2016 school year data shows that although African American students comprise 50% of the student population, they disproportionately make up 94% of all official out of class office referrals for behavioral disruptions. 84% of these referrals for African American students were for Carver's young men. The 2016-2017 school year data so far reflects that African American male students comprise almost 100% of all official out of class office referrals. Referrals reflect that students are generally out of class for a minimum of 30 minutes. However, some referrals can reflect up to 2 hours of out of class time or entire afternoons. It should be noted that the data may be more harrowing when we consider all of the students that are removed from class due to behavioral disruptions where an official office referral is not written or tracked. From conversations with teachers, support staff, and administration, the number of office referrals for African American males may be almost double if all out of class time was consistently tracked to fidelity. The most frequent behavioral categories for out of class referrals include: "violence/aggression", "classroom walkouts", and general "disruptive" behaviors.

One of the most important factors that our design team has been sure to highlight during this process is that in most cases, the root causes of these behaviors that cause African American males to miss class far exceed the control of the students themselves. Many factors play a part in the behavioral disruptions that keep students out of class beyond the demeanor or character of the students themselves. High numbers of community violence and personal loss in the Bayview Hunter's Point neighborhood can often lead to complex trauma within our students. This trauma can often cause fear based fight or flight responses that (from the outside) look like "disruptive" or "aggressive" behaviors. The most recent Social Emotional and Culture Climate Report for Carver indicated that only 52% of the students felt safe at school. Secondly, the disenfranchisement and systemic lack of resources that have plagued impoverished communities of color (like Bayview Hunter's Point) for generations, can often lead to a distrust of many institutions, even the educational system. Finally, culturally irrelevant and biased curriculum can often lead students to become disengaged. All of these factors can symbolically exclude African American males from the classroom long before their "disruptive behaviors" do.

Both qualitative and quantitative data shows that African American males as a demographic miss more class time than any other group at Carver Elementary School due to out of class behavioral referrals. This severe loss of instructional time at Carver is highly correlated with lower standardized test scores and F&P scores. 89.9% of all African American students at Carver scored as “not proficient” on the 2016 ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment while 94% scored as “not proficient” on the 2016 Math Smarter Balanced Assessment. Given the above described statistics regarding trajectories for African American males, it is imperative that we as a school engage and include African American male students as active participants in their classrooms during these foundational years. As a school site, we are committed to addressing the underlying factors that drive the behavioral disruptions that keep students out of class and in the office. **Our challenge statement is how can we prevent the loss of instructional time for African American male students?**

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

Several realities would change if instructional time was increased for African American males. Increased instructional minutes time would allow them more time to absorb more academic material. It would give them more opportunities to practice this material during both group and independent work. It would allow teachers to collect more academic data on students so that any gaps or misunderstandings could be addressed. Students would feel more competent as learners and would take more academic risks. With increased academic confidence, students would be able to see themselves within the context of education and the path they should take in order to reach their long term goals. If African American males were in class more, the Achievement Gap that exists within the on district, statewide and nationwide levels would grow smaller. High school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college graduation rates could improve. These increased educational opportunities could lead to increased employment opportunities and eventually, the cycle of poverty for many families can be disrupted.

With increased time in the classroom, African American male students could feel a stronger sense of school engagement. Students would feel more connected to their classmates and teachers. This increased relational trust would allow them to feel more comfortable trusting their teacher to meet their needs and care for them, decreasing the need for many of the “disruptive” and “noncompliant” behaviors that often occur. With increased relational trust with their peers, interpersonal conflicts would decrease and so would out of class referrals for “violence” and “aggression”. If students were in class more, their stamina for academic performance over long periods of time would increase, leading to less behavioral disruptions in the afternoon due to students simply being

burnt out. These academic and behavioral results of increased instructional time would lead to overall changes in school climate such as perceived sense of safety and school engagement (and therefore attendance).

For teachers and staff, increased face time with African American male students would lead to improvements in their practice as educators. As they experience a range of African American young men with various backgrounds, characteristics, interests, and learning styles, implicit biases and stereotypes can be checked. Educators can build stronger relationships with students, their families, and the larger community. Educators would become more competent in relating to students in ways that are culturally relevant, genuine, and personal. Because agents of the educational system would be changing, eventually the educational system itself would change. Those who create and implement the policies and systems that affect African American young men would actually have this particular demographic in mind when constructing them. School can become a system that truly benefits all students, regardless of color or socioeconomic status.

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

When students lose instructional minutes they miss valuable time and opportunities to develop, practice and strengthen academic knowledge and interpersonal skills that they will need to compete and thrive in the 21st century. In order for Dr. George Washington Carver Academic Elementary School to ensure that all of our students are progressing toward the Vision 2025 Graduate Profile, we have to find ways to keep our African American males in the classroom and engaged. When one part of the Carver Village is struggling, we all are. We have seen in our qualitative as well as our quantitative data that our African American males are losing the most instructional minutes and we have to get to the root of why and what we can do to combat that. How can we as educators, parents, community members and students come together and make sure that ALL Carver students are progressing together on an equitable level? A part of being in the classroom is seeing yourself in the classroom, understanding and believing that you are just as deserving as anyone else to be in the space and excel. Our students have to have a sense of purpose and knowledge of self and for many of our African American males they do not see themselves in the classroom setting let alone excelling in the classroom. We have to find ways to bring our African American males into the conversation. What skills do they feel they already have and what skills and/ or steps can we build on together to not only engage our African American males but to help develop the idea of lifelong learning into their minds and hearts. Carver Elementary has to continue to collaborate and build the community

partnerships that we have to show our students, in particular our African American males, all of the options they truly have, so that they can begin to take ownership and pride in planning their own futures.

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

The educational trajectories of Carver's African American young male students have long been a matter of urgency for our administration and school staff. A 'Behavioral Response to Intervention' tiered approach has been used to try and address the disproportionate amount of time this particular demographic spends out of class. From a Tier 1 school wide perspective, our school has implemented multiple positive behavioral interventions and supports to improve overall school climate, school engagement, and social-emotional management skills amongst students. Such interventions include: school wide raffles to promote safe, respectful, and responsible choices, *Playworks* programming to promote conflict resolution skills, and school wide assemblies, talent shows, and dances to promote school connectedness and cultural relevancy. Additionally, classroom teachers have gone above and beyond to learn and implement the culturally relevant practices promoted by Dr. Sharroky Hollie as well as the principals of Restorative Justice. These practices create more engaging and culturally responsive classrooms. They have also equipped teachers with the tools necessary to form deeper connections with their students. Our school has partnered with the UCSF Hearts program to empower staff to understand and address the neurobiological and psychological impacts of complex trauma. Because of these trainings, staff approach students from a more trauma sensitive lens, helping to truly support students rather than villainize them or escalate situations.

On a more micro Tier 2 and 3 level, our school has implemented the *Mentoring for Success* program where students with high needs in various domains are matched with a caring adult who can provide a consistent and unconditionally positive relationship on campus. This program has been shown to improve both academic performance and attendance. Mentees report a sense of excitement to come to school in order to spend time with their mentors, allowing students to experience school in a more positive light. Our school has increased the amount of mental health resources offered to both students and families on site. Increased involvement in counseling has equipped many students with the self management skills necessary to regulate strong emotional responses. This has allowed many students to remain in class more consistently for longer periods of time. From an academic perspective, our school has implemented many small group instructional supports to fill in educational gaps and try

to give students the tools to perform at grade level. With these increase academic tools, some disruptive and off tasks behaviors have been curbed because students are no longer falling behind.

Implementing these many supports and interventions has taught us that our task is not an impossible one. Because of the above interventions, we have been able to decrease chronic truancy rates for African American students by almost 10% and decrease our suspension rate for African American students from 4.9% to 0.8% in just one year. Our goal, however, is not simply to keep students in the building. Our most important goal is to keep students in the classroom, actively learning. We have learned that in order to elevate our school's practice to the next level and truly address many of the root causes of our challenge, we need to increase the size of our village. We need the perspectives of Bayview families, Bayview Community Based Organizations, and influential African American men from the community who have found ways to successfully navigate the school system in ways that improved their own life trajectories. We need these community members to shed light on our challenge and engage with our students in fresh and innovative ways. We need the rich history and inherent strengths of these organizations to enrich student support services on campus. Securing the Innovation Grant will ensure these community partnerships come to fruition.

### **How have you engaged your school to identify your challenge/opportunity for this process?**

Our team has engaged on many levels in order to identify a critical challenge here at Dr. George Washington Carver Academic Elementary School. Not only have we attended an initial meeting with iLab representatives and the Innovation Grant bootcamp, but, a core team also created an exhaustive list of the most pressing challenges that we as a staff could possibly work on in order to better serve our students. While this core team consisted of a few teachers and support staff, the whole Carver staff had the chance to vote on the top challenge: decreasing the number of disruptive behaviors that kept students out of class so that we can increase the number of instructional minutes students are receiving. We have actively consulted with Carver's Union Building Committee Representative with the United Educators of San Francisco Union. This representative has been a part of the conversations used to collect qualitative data, has approved of the challenge presented, and was part of the voting process.

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

Our **Principal** is a product of San Francisco Unified Schools, who has served over 20

years as an educator with SFUSD in various roles: a paraprofessional, a teacher at Carver for over a decade, a central office administrator in the area of Science within the Bayview Superintendent's Zone, an assistant Principal at Visitacion Valley Middle School, and a Principal here at Carver for the last 2 years. He brings the priceless perspective of being an African American male, especially one who has navigated through SFUSD as a student and professional, with success. In addition to his many perspectives, also brings the lens as a parent who has raising two African American males through the SFUSD school system and through college. He is a life-long resident of San Francisco with many connections within the San Francisco community.

Our **School Social Worker** has worked 4 years serving the most sensitive populations in our Bay View elementary schools. Prior to that, she served the community of East Harlem, New York as a 3rd grade teacher. She has many connections to vital resources that our students and families with the greatest needs can benefit from while also bringing an extensive knowledge of educational and child development theory. She will bring the valuable lens of “student reality,” that is, the day-to-day problems and needs of the students.

Our team’s collection of **Classroom Teachers** together bring over 10 years of teaching experience to the table. Because our challenge focuses on increasing instructional minutes, our team’s classroom teachers are vital in giving the insight necessary to know what success looks like in the classroom. The classroom teachers on our team vary from Kindergarten all the way to fourth grade, bringing great insight as to how foundational skills build upon each other each school year. In addition to the current grade they teach, each of our teachers have also taught other grades, adding to their mastery of elementary education and insight on student developmental levels, behaviors, and needs.

Our **Technology Educator** has served as a K-12 substitute teacher with SFUSD for over eight years and has worked with Carver for 7 of those years. In the last 3 years, she has worked with all of our students, K-5, with technology. She brings the perspective of what is expected of our students beyond the walls of Carver, including other elementary school settings, as well as secondary education. She is also provides the perspectives of what is expected of our students in regards to technology and the 2025 graduate profile.

Our **Academic Response to Intervention Facilitator** has about twenty years experience teaching in elementary schools. She has spent many years in the hardest to staff schools in the Southeast section of San Francisco and is well aware of the

needs, strengths, and weaknesses of our students. In addition, her child has attended two of the hard-to-staff schools, so she will bring the valuable perspectives of both parent and educator.

Our **Resource Specialist** has served 20 years in the district, 5 years as a classroom teacher and 15 years as a Special Education Resource Specialist in the hard-to-staff schools in Bay View. She too has guided her own children through the San Francisco Unified School district, and may lend a lens through the parent perspective. This individual also serves as our Performing Arts coordinator and is connected to numerous educational resources that our students, families, and staff enjoy each year.

We plan to engage the rest of our school by conducting surveys, observations, and interviews and gathering input and feedback during staff meetings. We will also invite all staff to participate in the project throughout the process. We plan to enlist the help of our Parent Liaison to have access to parents to get their input throughout the design process. Finally, our various roles all give us different lenses through which we interact with students throughout the day. We plan to capitalize on this by getting student insight and feedback throughout the design process.

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

A prerequisite for joining Carver's design team was a willingness to attend design sessions. As a design team, we have committed to attending each of the design sessions at Thurgood Marshall with as many members as possible. As a team, in the last two weeks, we have already met several times on site to prepare for the design process, a trend which will continue during the coming semesters. We commit to working with our coach as a complete team on site at Carver as much as needed. This will allow us to engage together in the pre and post work of the design sessions. Should any members of the team be unable to attend the design sessions, these on site meetings with our coach will also ensure that all team members are equipped with the same information and on the same page.

### **Which Innovation bootcamp did your school participate in?**

August 22, 2016, 4:30pm-7:30pm