QTEA Innovation Award Application - 2016

Application # 1
School Name: Independence High School
School Org Number: 466
Principal Name: Anastasia Klafter
Principal Email: klaftera@sfusd.edu
Person submitting grant:
Submitter's Email:

Describe the equity challenge or opportunity you would like to tackle in a different way.
As an independent study school, we serve a diverse group of students, many of whom have not been successful in their previous school or schools. We offer a unique opportunity for students to attend as little as one hour a week, and yet we still we have a large population of students who are chronically absent (attending school less than 90% of the time required). 23% of our students were identified as being chronically absent in 2015, with our African American students at 30%, students with disabilities at 28% and English Learners at 31%.

What outcome(s) or change(s) would you like your design to achieve at your school site?
If our students were present and engaged in their work on a more consistent basis, we would be able to raise our graduation and lower the number of students dropping out. More diplomas means more students continuing onto college and career and more students finding themselves financially secure in the future.

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?
This is an equity dilemma because of the disproportionality of chronic absenteeism among students of color, especially African American, and the disproportionality of chronic absenteeism among our English Learners and our students with disabilities. As an alternative school, we need to ensure that all students who come us have the same chance of success and we should working against the achievement gap, certainly not replicating it. The Vision 2025 Graduate Profile of a self-actualized and well-prepared students is our goal.

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

I am new in this role of principal, but the school has worked very hard to create a safe and welcoming space for students. Our wellness center works closely with students needing emotional and mental health support and our offerings of yoga, mindfulness and gardening appeal to students with issues around coming to school. Because of these initiatives, we do have many students who feel safe and supported at Independence High School.

This year I have launched "Action Teams" to address problems of practice at the school and one of these teams is focused on creating tiered interventions for the issues of attendance and chronic absenteeism. I am hoping the design team can develop and inform the work of this team.

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

My entry plan included one-on-one meetings with all faculty and staff and everyone identified the issue of chronic absenteeism as a major challenge for the school. The faculty also came together in a goal-setting protocol at the beginning of this year and chose this challenge as something they wanted to work on specifically this year through the work of our Action Teams.

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

Anna Klafter, Principal
Kelly Kruger, Assistant Principal
Jennifer Roffle, Head Counselor
Kiara Gardiner, 11th Grader
(Joseph Machado, Teacher)
(Ignacio Saldana, Teacher) - available depending on our ability to meet here at school with our design coach occasionally

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

We have the time and effort already, and I will reinforce with stipends for work outside of the day and also exchange PD time for time spent in the iLab. It would be quite helpful to our staff to hold some of the meetings at our school site. I will also give our student participant school credit and a stipend in exchange for her work on the project.

Which Innovation bootcamp did your school participate in?

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