

## QTEA Innovation Award Application - 2016

**Application #** 16

**School Name:** Marshall Elementary

**School Org Number:** 714

**Principal Name:** Peter Avila

**Principal Email:** avilap@sfusd.edu

**Person submitting grant:**

**Submitter's Email:**

**Describe the equity challenge or opportunity 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 Marshall Elementary 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 Marshall 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 Marshall Elementary 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 Marshall 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 2015-2016, only 45% of families have consistent Internet access at home, and only 30% have desktop/laptop computer available for the children at home. Marshall'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 Marshall Elementary 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 Marshall'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. This especially evident in the primary grades, with the average teacher tenure is 21.5 years, and if we subtract the first year 2nd grade teacher, the average increases to 26 years. 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 Marshall teachers to re-imagine 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?**

Marshall received an Innovation Grant Award in 2015-2016 to address the challenge outlined above. In collaboration with our iLab Coach Marshall's team engaged in the Design Thinking Process of Discover, Define, and Do our team identified Three Key

Themes that addressed the challenge:

1. Personalized Learning: How might Marshall increase student choice and autonomy as learners?
2. Classroom Environment: How might design space and to facilitate more dynamic student learning?
3. Growth Mindset and Professional Learning: How might Marshall support and encourage teachers to reflect and plan for their students to exercise their full intelligence?

Through these three themes the upper grade teachers began planning how to redesign their classrooms to better reflect the type of 21st Century Learning we hoped students would be engaged. The initial thought was how technology would be the essential component of the reconfigured room, but as we learned from other schools and business examples, it was the actual use of the physical space that needs to change from the traditional 20th Century classroom. The traditional rows of desks and tables are difficult for teachers to plan for multiple means of student interactions and instruction. Having students move from whole group to small collaborative grouping, to individual learning spaces was difficult, if not impossible given the constraints of the furniture that was designed for the traditional classroom setting.

Teachers in the upper grades researched how the 21st Century Classroom function, with the ability for multiple seating arrangements and learning spaces that can easily be transformed without losing valuable instruction time. Mr. Gomez, 5th grade teacher, engaged the students in the challenge of “What would be the Ideal Classroom?” Students in collaborative teams independently researched business and classroom working environments, from how Facebook and Google design their office spaces to promote and encourage creativity and problem solving environments, to new 21st Century Schools throughout the world who have pushed the boundaries of what a modern day school room functions. The student teams created their classrooms with drawing and models and presented them to the class. At the end of the process the students incorporated the best and most plausible ideas from each to design to create the “Master 21st Century 5th Grade Room.” The room is a mix of easily interchangeable seating arrangements with desk that move from small collaborative groupings to individual workspaces. The teacher has two instructional zones for whole and small group interactions, with the students having the ability to choose from individual and small collaborative seating arrangements. Some work areas will have standing desks, while the leveled library reading area is stocked with comfortable seating and pillows. Technology will be easily accessible for students through a SmartBoard instructional

zone, along with student area for laptop and iPad workstations. This classroom is serving as our prototype for the other upper grade teachers to use as a model as they engage in a similar redesign process of their rooms.

To address the other two Themes, the upper grades, along with the STEM teacher created a Project Based Electives Cycle. This was a six-week program that each of the teachers developed projects on a topic that inspired them. Our belief was for Marshall to develop and cultivate creativity in our students, teachers are the agents of change to model that character trait. Our theory of action was that by giving teachers the freedom to draw upon their own interests and creative spirit this would translate to projects that will be highly engaging and relevant to student lives. If schools want to cultivate creativity in their students, it is critical that teachers are given this same opportunity to express their own. The 4th, 5th grade and STEM teachers developed 5 electives:

1. Theater-students created and performed an original play. Students wrote play, designed and created setting props, costumes, and music. Play was performed for entire school.
2. Restaurant-students planned and developed a restaurant/café. Students learned business model of opening a restaurant, nutrition, mathematical concepts of recipes, and economics of cost and profit margins.
3. Coding-Marshall's STEM teacher taught the basic concepts of coding using Google Coding Platform. Students learned BLOCKLY Coding Language (BOL), using story time module, and created own animated stories.
4. Marshall Newspaper-Students created monthly digital newspaper. Students assigned jobs of writer, editor, photographer, cartoonist, and production.
5. History of Latin Dance-students learned about the historical dances of Latin America. Performed dances as final product for entire school community.

### **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?**

As the data indicates, the majority of students and families at Marshall are some of the most underserved in San Francisco. 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 six white students in grades 3rd-5th who took the test all scored at standard or above in English Language Arts, while our Hispanic/Latino was 24.5%. The opportunity gap is even more

pronounced in Math, with 100% of our white students scoring at or meeting or exceeding standards, while only 17.9% of Hispanic/Latino scoring at that level. What is discouraging is that our scores dropped from 2015 to 2016, this is one of the most compelling factors why we need to continue with the implementation the 3 Themes of 21st Century Learning discovered throughout the grades. The teacher in grades 3rd-5th have acknowledged that many of the students they are teaching do not possess the essential skills required by the Common Core Standards, and subsequently assessed in the Smarter Balance Assessments. They frequently comment that most Marshall students lack the creativity to solve problems, have a growth mindset when confronted with difficult concepts, usually giving up and or asking for help from an adult, nor the stamina to focus and critically read for an extended period of time. These are the essential skills that San Francisco Unified has identified as critical for students in their Vision 2025 Graduate Profile.

As is evident by most recent data, Marshall has leveraged our Multi-Tier Level of Support to maximize student outcomes in comparison to similar demographics in the district. Marshall 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.

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

As was indicated above, Marshall received the 2015-2016 Innovation Grant. The Design Team focused our prototypes in the upper grades to assess whether our Themes were addressing the challenge we identified. After the initial roll out of the elective cycles and 21st Century Classroom Experience, it was clear that for Marshall to overcome the challenge, and truly transform the school to meet the demands of the new economy, our students cannot wait until the 3rd or 4th grade to engage in this type of learning. It is critical that we begin in the earliest grades to expose the students to the essential 21st Century Learning experience in order to properly prepared for the rigorous demands of the Common Core and instructional shifts required by the teachers. If Marshall does receive the Innovation Grant, the resources will be dedicated to the primary grades (K-3) to ensure we have vertical alignment of the curriculum and pedagogical shifts currently underway in the grades 4th and 5th.

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

Marshall 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 is the 2nd year our SSC and ILT recommended Marshall allocate funds to create a full time STEM position. This position has proven to be critical in the design process, implementation, and leading professional development opportunities for the 21st century learning experience we are attempting to create at Marshall.

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

Marshall'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 Marshall into the 21st Century educational institution that continues to be an exemplar school serving the students and families in the Mission District.

Marshall Design Team:

Peter Avila-Principal

Covi Velera –Literacy Coach

Esmeralda Gomez-5th Grade Teacher

Marco Bianchi-STEM Teacher

René Galvez-3rd Grade Teacher

Rosa Aléman-1st Grade Teacher

Andres Tobar-kindergarten Teacher

Elizabeth Rood-parent, former principal at Leadership High school, current Vice president of Education Strategy and Director, Center for Childhood Creativity

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

Our team will build upon the successes and challenges that of our previous team. Marshall is well aware of the commitment that is required to meet the requirements of the Design process and have personally witnessed the transformational shifts in the classroom. Marshall has a dedicated team of educators who understand the need for a unified vision of change and are excited to continue the work that began in 2015-2016. Schools are agents of change, and we believe that Marshall has the individuals who are ready to confront the challenge that has been outlined.

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

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