

Closing the Achievement Gap Grant Proposal – Cochran MS

Cochran Middle School has a total population of 1,014 students with 206 of those students identified as African American. Traditionally, our African American students have demonstrated some modest levels of academic success; however, the growth has been slow. Several data markers indicate there are areas that should be targeted for academic growth and overall richer learning experience and for the African American student which in turn would help transform the culture of learning for the school.

At Cochran, our African American students are numerically underrepresented in our academic enrichment programs. For example, of the 206 African American students enrolled, only five of them are identified as gifted, which merely represents 5% of the gifted population in the school. In addition, there are only sixteen African American students who participate in the School for Advanced Studies program, which represents 9% of the total number of students in that program. In contrast, there is an overrepresentation of African American students participating in our Special Education and remedial mathematics and English programs. Additionally, if you look at our CST scores more than half of our African American students scored in the Far Below Basic or Below Basic categories in mathematics, English or both.

In an effort to address these challenges, Cochran has implemented a variety of professional development strategies over the past few years including but not limited to participation in the district wide AEMP (Academic English Mastery Program); SDAIE (Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English) workshops; Robert Marzano based instructional strategies as well as Teacher-to-Teacher workshops addressing instructional strategies for struggling students, increasing student motivation, and improving classroom management. Although we have an excellent teaching staff, it had been difficult for some to academically engage many African American students.

Statement of Purpose:

Cochran Middle School is requesting funds in an effort to raise awareness of the cultural and social differences between the way our African American students tend to learn and with the way our teaching staff tend to instruct and the impact these differences have on student achievement. The grant funds will be used to provide teachers with various training opportunities as well as resources to better meet the social-emotional and academic needs of our African American students and provide our teachers and support staff with the specific tools and skills needed to help reduce the achievement gap and fully engage all students in the learning process. In addition to providing support to our faculty, we have a strategic plan to increase **parental involvement, home to school communication**, and overall awareness of supports provided by the school and those available in the community as well work closely with our African American students to create an environment where academic success is embraced.

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SMART Goals:

Cochran Middle School believes that taking a comprehensive approach will yield tangible results. To that end, we are focusing on individualized student support, parent participation and integration, as well as cultural awareness by teachers and implementation of culturally relevant and responsive instructional practices.

Student Program SMART Goals:

- During the second semester of the 2012-2013 school year, 80% of the African American Family Network student participants will demonstrate academic improvement as indicated by participation in culmination. (Culmination requirements include no F's and no more than two unsatisfactory marks in citizenship, as well as a clean discipline profile.)
- On the 2012-2013 California Standards Test, we will decrease the number of students performing in the Below Basic and Far Below Basic bands from 68% to less than 50% in math.

Parent Program SMART Goals:

- During the second semester of the 2012-2013 school year, there will be a 25% increase in attendance in school-based activities by African American parents/guardians as measured by sign-in sheets.
- During the second semester of the 2012-2013 school year, there will be 85% attendance rate by parents/guardians of the African-American Family Network at school based activities, events and classes as measured by sign-in sheets, surveys, and reflections.

Teacher Program SMART Goals:

- During the second semester of the 2012-2013 school year, teachers will demonstrate an increased awareness of cultural and social influences on achievement of African American students as measured by pre and post-surveys, as well as, documentation of cultural differentiation in lesson plans/activities.
- During the second semester of the 2012-2013 school year, teachers will increased the utilization of culturally relevant and responsive instructional strategies measured by documentation of cultural differentiation in lesson plans/activities and observations.

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School Data (African American population only):

Student Data	#	%
AA students	206	20
Identified Gifted	5	5
AP Enrollment	NA	NA
Special Education	50	30
Participating in Remedial or Intervention Classes	186	90
Proficient & Advanced in ELA	51	24
Proficient & Advanced in Math	23	10
Below Basic and Far Below Basic in ELA	94	44
Below Basic and Far Below Basic in Math	146	68
Attendance		96.1
Suspension Rate	215	20
Staff Information	#	%
AA Teachers on staff	14	22
Average years of experience	16	
Attendance rate		96.2

Strategies:

We are proposing a three-pronged approach to tackling the underachievement of our African American students. Our plan is to look at achievement as more than just doing well on a test; we are going to look at and address the needs of our students and provide the support and resources necessary for them to succeed in the urban school setting. To accomplish this, we must support our teachers in developing or sharpening their skills with working with African American students. We must also work closely with the families of our students by providing them with a more stream-lined access to the school and the services we provide. In addition, we must work directly with the students themselves to help them not only understand the importance school but how to take advantage of all that school has to offer. This comprehensive approach takes into consideration the diverse needs of our entire learning community.

The first step in this process is to improve the way in which each of the three stakeholder groups (student, teachers, parents) communicate and interact with one another. Here, we see technology as being the best medium in which to accomplish this. Integrating the use of technology effectively in the classroom will be a vehicle to get our African American students more engaged in their own learning and acquire the skills needed to be successful in the digital age. In addition, technology will be used as a means of collecting and sharing timely data with the parent as a means to improve the communication between school and home. This will enable parents to be more informed on the progress of their students. The only way this

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will be effective is to not only train the teachers on the value of using technology as a means communication, but provide extensive training to parents as well.

***Focus: Student Support**

African American Family Network - This pilot program is aimed to help create an individualized system of academic, social, psychological and cultural resources students need to raise achievement levels. This program provides an individualized and synchronized network of student supports in the form of the Individualized Achievement Plan for each student participant.

Our pilot program will be comprised of twenty randomly selected students and their families. Each family will be assigned a Cochran staff member as their program coordinator, or personal school contact, who will help construct and coordinate that student's Individual Achievement Plan. This plan will consist of academic, extracurricular, and counseling supports, as well as the following process measures; weekly progress reports, attendance reports, behavior reports (as needed) as well as any other relevant needed information. Students will meet with their program coordinator on a regular basis (one program coordinator per five families) to review student progress. Families will participate in monthly meetings with their program coordinator to review and monitor student progress. The achievement team (Family, student, and Coordinator) will collaboratively craft the achievement plan as well create an effective communication system.

While the African American Family Network deals specifically with twenty families, or 10% of Cochran's African American student population, it is designed to also utilize the three-pronged approach as it will be taking into consideration teacher participation, family engagement and individualized student monitoring. The program also is our deliberate attempt to address the lack of communication between our African American families and the school. It is our intent that this endeavor will provide a model for the construction of effective relevant communication systems between Cochran Middle School and the families of our African American students. This program will be closely monitored by administration to ensure both appropriateness and effectiveness.

Secondly, we plan on organizing clubs to get the students involved in school and that support our resolve to create an atmosphere that embraces academic excellence. The creation strong Black Student Union is the first step in the process. This club would meet weekly during lunch time to discuss issues at school, the importance of education, and planning for their academic future. There would be the creation of an after school book club where students would select novel from a list of book by African American authors and/or books address the needs or concerns of the African American adolescent. Participants of these clubs would then be taken on several cultural and college-planning field trips as well as be encouraged to attend community programs and events.

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Additionally, we would like to target a minimum of 50 African American students to come to before or after school tutoring in math. Last year, 68% of our African American student performed Below Basic or Far Below Basic on the CST in math. That number is far too high. We will be strategic in our selection of students to invite as to group students according to their area of academic need.

***Focus: Family Engagement (Parent)**

Cochran provides multiple opportunities for parents to learn and get involved in the school in varying capacities. However, the rate of participation by African American parents has remained extremely low at all school-based activities. Moreover, we have experienced difficulties maintaining consistent and effective line communication with African American families. Hence our aim is to create culturally relevant supports and programs as well as craft an effective form of communication between school and families. Our aim to provide families with not only awareness but strategies derived from the perceived needs and the expressed interest from the surveys that will be given. These needs will be addressed through a series of workshops and seminars delivered throughout the year on varying topics based on that feedback. Topics to include, but not limited to: technology as a form of communication, how to support your child academically, parenting strategies, high school and college preparedness, etc.

In addition, we also intend on taking our families on learning trips in order to provide a more a diversified authentic learning experience. In addition, our plan is to employ an aggressive marketing strategy geared to drawing the parents in. We believe that once we get the parents on campus to experience something positive this will help break down some of the barriers which currently hinder them from participating in school-sponsored activities.

***Focus: Teacher**

No one can dispute that teacher quality and the employment of effective teaching practices is paramount to the academic success of students. Having surveyed our staff to ascertain needs and concerns our teachers have with regards to the achievement levels of African American students, we have found that many teachers desire specific strategies appropriate to our demographic as well as an increase awareness of cultural learning differences. To address these self-identified areas of need, we will form an action team of teacher volunteers who will commit to participate in a literary study, construct culturally relevant lessons, and facilitated multiple professional developments on use of specific strategies, tools, and resources derived from the literary group.

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In addition to our literary group, our plan is to engage our staff in learning opportunities by encouraging their attendance at conferences, seminars, and lectures addressing how to best support the needs of the African American Student and provide them with both the basic skills and technological skills necessary to be successful in the 21st century (UCLA's Round Table Discussion on Discipline, UTLA's African American Education Committee Conference, COBA's Black Child Conference, etc). Teachers who attend any conference that is paid for by the grant, they would be required to facilitate a professional development session to the staff during a content meeting or through our Teacher to Teacher Workshop series. Furthermore, we would like to organize at least one cultural field trip for teachers to highlight some of the accomplishments of African Americans and/or assist in the understanding of where our students come from.

Our Closing the Achievement Gap plan focuses on the three major components of any successful school: students, parents, and teachers. We recognize how all three stakeholders of our Cochran community play an essential role and aid in the plan to raise the academic achievement levels of our students. As each of these three interconnected groups gain new skills and strategies for success they will, in turn, positively strengthen and reinforce the skills and efforts of the other two groups.

Outcomes and Performance Standards:

The expected outcomes for our students who participate in the African American Family Network program will be increased participation in extracurricular and academic supports, improved grade point averages and attendance rates, development of authentic relationships with adults and support systems, and a decrease in behavior referrals and suspensions. These combined supports will allow for eighty percent graduation rate which far exceeds historic baselines.

From our parents, we expect increased participation in school based activities as well as participation in the newly developed individualized communication system. In addition, we expect parent input to help develop authentic strategies and tools to help support, encourage and monitor student achievement. We expect our parents to acquire culturally relevant strategies and tools to support student achievement.

With the implementation of this plan, we expect our teachers will acquire and increased awareness of cultural and social influences on student achievement. In addition our program will result in colleague collaboration as we work together to develop, present, and utilize culturally relevant instructional strategies to work with our students.

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Deliverables:

Students:

- 80% culmination rate of participating students in the African American pilot program.
- Increased participation rates versus control group (non participating students) first semester baselines in: extracurricular and academic supports, counseling services, and attendance rates.
- Improved Grade Point Averages versus first semester baselines.
- Increased understanding of their academic progress and learning through the use of technology.
- Increased attendance rates versus control group (non participating students) and first semester base lines.
- Decreased truancy and referral rates versus control group (non participating students) and first semester base lines.
- The African American Family Network will result in a toolkit that will provide guidelines, tools, and strategies that can be gradually implemented to service a larger group of African American families, which we believe will improve achievement levels and create a culture of success.

Parents:

- Survey results demonstrating increased awareness of the impact of cultural and social differences on learning and student achievement.
- Increased participation in school based activities as tracked by sign-in sheets.
- Increased and improved communication with the school as tracked by logs and surveys.
- Application of learned strategies as determined by pre and post workshop surveys.
- Increased awareness and utilization of student support strategies.
- Utilizing technology as an effective communication tool with the school.
- Increased awareness of daily and weekly academic as well behavioral progress of student.

Teachers:

- Increased awareness of social and cultural differences and their impact on student achievement.
- Teachers will have new tools and strategies that are culturally relevant and responsive to the African American student as determined by pre and pos surveys.

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- The utilization of these new strategies in the classroom as evidenced by lesson plans, work samples, and classroom observations.
- An opportunity for data driven strategic collaboration as evidenced by teacher-to-teacher workshops.
- Increase utilization of culturally relevant instructional strategies.
- Increase utilization of technology as a form of communication with the parent.

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Action Plan Timeline

Action Item	Who is Responsible?	By When?	What is the expected outcome and source of evidence?
Secure guest speaker	Ms. Rafi, Ms. Purdy	1/18	Guest speaker to present to parents and teachers at our kick-off workshop in February. Topics to include how to best support your student, open lines of communication between school and home, etc.
Creation of the pre/post surveys for teachers participating in literary review	Ms. Rafi and Mr. Hubbard	1/28	Surveys to determine teachers' awareness level of culturally relevant and responsive teaching strategies and how to better meet the social-emotional needs of African American students.
Randomly select 20 families to participate in pilot program	Ms. Rafi, Mr. Hubbard, Ms. Yaganagi, Mr. Bravo	1/31	The 20 families that will participate in the African American Family Network pilot program.
Select the African American Family Network Coordinators	Ms. Rafi, Mr. Hubbard, Ms. Johnson	1/31	The 4 Program Coordinators will coordinate/facilitate all needs of the 20 selected families.
Create Portfolios/Binders for each Family	Ms. Rafi & Mr. Hubbard as well as 2 additional Program Coordinators	1/31	Portfolio (toolkit) with logs, strategies, tools, individualized for each family and student.
Create Literary Review Group	Ms. Johnson, Ms. Negash, Ms. Hardemion, Ms. Rafi	1/31	Increased awareness of social and cultural differences and their impact on student achievement. New tools and strategies which are culturally relevant as determined by pre and pos surveys.
Continental Breakfast	Ms. Johnson, Ms. Purdy, Mr. Hubbard, Ms. Cannon, Ms. Negash,	2/2	This kick-off event will be the first step in opening our doors wider to our parents and community. Evaluations will be used to determine effective ways of bringing in families and ideas for creating a new culture of caring and awareness on campus.
Planning parent workshops	Ms. Johnson, Ms. Purdy, Mr. Hubbard, Ms. Negash	2/11	Increased participation in school based activities based on logs and records. Acquired culturally relevant strategies and tools to support student achievement. Increased communication with the school .
Black Student Union, Book Club, etc.	Mr. Hubbard, Ms. Negash, Ms. Hardemion, Ms. Rafi	2/11	Creating clubs of interest to students that focus on academic achievement, addressing areas of concerns on campus, etc.
Learning Trips	Ms. Rafi, Mr. Hubbard, Ms.	2/25	Selecting locations for cultural and social

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	Purdy, Ms. Johnson		experiences that will increase awareness of cultural and social impact of student achievement.
Creation of pre/post surveys for teachers participating in teacher-to-teacher workshops	Workshop Facilitators (TBD)	3/16	Surveys determining effectiveness of workshops and identifying strategies and skills to be implemented in the classroom.
Data-driven strategic collaboration amongst teachers on effective instructional strategies	Selected Teachers from Literary Group	4/12	Members of the Literary Group will facilitate several Teacher-to-Teacher Workshops on the topics/strategies learned from the readings and discussions.

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Budget Worksheet

Budget Item	Quantity	Cost	Describe the Purpose of Services/Activities and Provide Data-Based Justification Supporting the Goals of the Grant
District Sponsored Training Rate	400 hours x \$25 hour	\$10,000	Pay teachers for attending workshops and conferences beyond their contracted day. The teachers would be responsible for presenting information gained from attending said conferences to the staff.
PD Teacher Regular	20 teachers x 12 hours x \$66	15,840	Pay for teachers who are participating in the Literary Review Group. These teachers will meet for 3 hours over a course of 4 Saturdays. These participants would then be expected to facilitate workshops on the strategies learned and topic discussed, create lesson plans utilizing the strategies and be amiable being observed using these strategies.
Day to Day Substitute	10 Days	2,000	The substitutes would be used to cover teachers who are taking students on culturally relevant or college preparedness trips. Additionally, they would be used to cover teachers who needed time to collaborate on effective instructional strategies.
Teacher X/Z Tutoring	5 teachers x 32 hours of tutoring x \$66	10,560	Support for a targeted before and after school tutoring program for at least 50 students because 68% of the African American students scored Below Basic or Far Below Basic in mathematics on the 2012 CST.
Instructional Materials		9,500	Books for the Literary Review Group as well as made available for the entire faculty. Additional cultural relevant and responsive supplementary materials and software would be purchased to support the implementation of the lessons using the specific strategies identified.
General Supplies		8,672	General supplies for the implantation of the culturally relevant and responsive lessons to be implemented as well as additional supplies to enhance the classroom environments so that they are reflective of African American culture. These funds will also be used to purchase supplies for our parent workshops.
Staff Conference Attendance		5,000	To cover the registration fees for staff attendance at the UCLA African American Disciple Symposium, the UTLA African American Education Committee Conference, the COBA Black Child Conference, and any other conference that addresses meeting the

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			needs of the African American student.
Curricular Trips	6	2,200	To cover the cost of the bus in order to transport students, parents, and/or staff to culturally relevant or college preparing destinations. (African American History Museum, plays, performances, cultural fairs, nearby colleges and universities, etc.)
Administration Supplemental Time	\$66 x 48 hours	3,168	Supplemental pay for administrators to supervise and facilitate all of the Saturday professional development opportunities for the teachers.
Maintenance Overtime	\$35 x 50 hours	1,750	To cover the overtime of the maintenance staff on all of the Saturday professional development opportunities for the teachers.
Classified Overtime	\$35 x 100 hours	3,500	To cover the overtime to allow our special education assistants the ability to attend conferences/trainings beyond their assigned day.
Professional Expert	\$39 x 30 hours	1,170	These funds will be used to pay the guest speakers who present workshops/trainings for our parents and/or staff.

Total \$73,360