

## **RACE TO THE TOP: PROJECT 2 - Community Connections**

### **Executive Summary:**

Community Connections Project strengthens our supports to students and families to increase personalization of learning and enhance educational equity through the Union City Kids' Zone, Community Schools and intensive parent engagement. The funds, \$2,509,646, will be used to ramp up our Full Service Community Schools effort at Searles and Emanuele Elementary and Cesar Chavez Middle School. Funding will help provide infrastructure needs for the Kids' Zone; two bilingual community liaisons; facilitation training for the liaisons, parents and youth; extra support for our 21st Century Community Learning Centers and parent education in managing problem behavior among children. Additionally, funds will create Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APPT) which will replace traditional parent-teacher conferences and provide structured academic goal setting opportunities for parents, students, and teachers (three schools per year); a youth development coordinator in years two-four; books and supplies for a family resource center; and a Sparks Point Coordinator.

### **February 10, 2014**

This year, teachers at Emanuele, Hillview Crest and Searles Elementary have been implementing Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT). Implementing APTT is one of the activities in Project 2 of the RTT-D grant, meant to increase student achievement through parent involvement. Although this is a tremendous amount of work, teachers who have implemented it are seeing amazing results.

As part of the process, teachers hold three parent nights or afternoons throughout the year - in the fall, winter and spring. At those meetings, they share one or two foundational skills that are essential for students to master. For example, in the fall of kindergarten, all students need to know their letter sounds in order to become proficient readers. Then parents see a graph of how students in the class are progressing toward that goal. The students are numbered, so parents can see how their student did in relation to the class. Then the teacher models a game or activity that parents can use at home to teach the strategy, giving families all the materials they need. Parents then set a SMART goal for their student and spend the next several weeks working with their student to achieve the goal.

After the fall whole class meeting, teachers meet with parents individually in November during parent conferences to update progress. These conferences may be led by students in the upper grades. Then the families come together again in February as a whole group to see the progress on a graph and set new goals related to another foundational skill. These meetings are taking place now, and the results have been phenomenal. Parents and teachers alike are excited about the amount of growth they are seeing, and they are working together as a team to make it happen.

Janina Melgarejo-Carman, a kindergarten teacher at Searles says, "It did take hours to compile, but as a whole it is so worth it. The kids have been meeting grade level standards earlier than usual, which is amazing. It's only February, and I am in awe of their progress. I have had very positive feedback from parents, as well as myself, about the APTT. It's a really great step forward as far as the parent/teacher relationship."

In addition to the remarkable student growth, APTT meetings are increasing parent involvement and engagement in our schools. Attendance at the meetings has been higher than typical Back-to-School Nights, and many parents are arranging play dates to teach students the skills modeled in the meetings.

Jamila Williams, a parent in Andrea Nissan's class at Hillview Crest, stated, "Just like our first meeting, the second meeting was very productive and worthwhile. The presentation was comprehensive, easy to follow and fun. I am most appreciative of the time spent on the analysis, explaining the educational activities AND how she's able to engage the parents. I feel fortunate to be apart of this 'pilot' program, as I have seen my son's growth and enthusiasm to learn more! The resources provided are pretty phenomenal too."

Although this has been a lot of work for teachers and extra meetings for parents, the results have been worth it. We can't thank the teachers, coaches, parents, outreach coordinators and principals enough. Watch for APTT to begin at other sites over the next couple of years.

### **March 5, 2013**

"Much of the work in the project is an extension of the work Nancy and her partners have been working on for a while. Two of the main focus areas for the work in Project 2 are parent and youth engagement and ramping up the work of Kids' Zone.

#### **Parent and Youth Engagement:**

To increase parent and youth engagement, we will start implementing Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT) this fall at three sites. APTT is a research-based model of engaging parents in helping their children meet or exceed standards. Staff will be trained in implementing the model, which includes three team meetings a year with the classroom teacher and parents where they share aggregate and individual student performance data with parents; work together to set 60-day goals for each student based on the data; and model and practice learning activities for the home. There will be follow-up meetings with the parents to share formative data, evaluate progress and create an action plan for continued student improvement. Teachers will be compensated for the training time and for parent meetings scheduled outside the school day.

We will also build on the great work of the Puente Project and ICL to create a broader youth development program that is youth designed and led, and focuses on the hardest to engage students. We will identify and train youth and parent leaders to conduct quarterly community meetings or forums, creating a sense of community ownership for engagement in the schools. Finally we will provide various workshops for parents such as Family Literacy, Parent Project in Spanish, and technology training, just to name a few.

#### Ramp Up Kids' Zone Work:

The Union City Kids' Zone addresses development of children and their families in the Decoto Community, by partnering with multiple community organizations to create an accessible pipeline of services needed for "cradle to career" success. The RTT-D Grant provides much needed funding to support the infrastructure of Kids' Zone, such as staffing for clerical support and for community liaisons to work with the Decoto neighborhood.

We will support and expand existing services by adding teacher hourly and instructional materials for the 21st Century Community Learning Center after school programs at Emanuele and Searles Elementary Schools and Cesar Chavez Middle School; increase school readiness support for pre-K services to children living in the Kids' Zone; and add mental health interns at Searles and Emanuele.

In addition, we will establish a satellite Sparkpoint Center in collaboration with the City of Fremont, Family Resource Center. This is a project developed by the United Way that provides financial coaching, goal setting and monitoring to low income adults and families. It also offers saving match programs.

We are excited about the Community Connections Project and all the support and services it will bring to the New Haven community”.