

Southwest High School

Executive Summary

Student Population

Southwest High School is a high school in Macon, GA (Bibb County). It houses grades 9-12, and its current enrollment is approximately 1000 students. As of the 2008-2009 school year, Southwest was classified as a NI-7 school. For the past three years, Southwest has missed the graduation rate, math, and ELA targets.

Student Achievement

Student achievement in the area of reading has been decreasing over the past 3 years and science and social studies achievement scores on the GHSGT indicate a weakness in science (29% did not meet) and social studies (45 % did not meet). Mathematics has been a struggle for Southwest students with only 44.9% of the students meeting AMO expectations. With the AMO rising each year in math, it will be critical to provide math support to students. Additionally, the GHSGT will change next year in the area of mathematics, and students will be assessed over Math I, II, and III, which will create further challenge. A review of the data reports also indicates some positive results: a decrease in the dropout rate from 14.3% in 2006-2007 to 6.7% in 2008-2009; an increase in the number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement classes from 60 in 2007-2008 to 110 in 2008-2009; an increase in the percentage of students graduating from 43.8% in 2006-2007 to 53% in 2008-2009.

Transforming Southwest High School

A new principal was selected to lead the implementation of the Transformation Model for Southwest High School. Administrators and teachers at Southwest will be trained and have input into a rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation system (Georgia's Class Keys). The evaluation system will take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, as well as other factors such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective to student achievement and increased high school graduation rates.

School leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing the Transformation Model at Southwest High School, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates will be identified and rewarded. Those who, given ample opportunities to improve professional practice, but have not done so, will be removed from the school. Rewards will include the opportunity to attend state and local conferences and monetary rewards for classroom resources. In addition to financial incentives, there will be increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation school.

Data will be used to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards. The data will be continuous (formative, interim, and summative assessments) in order to inform teachers and assist them in differentiation of instruction to meet the academic needs of individual students. Southwest High School will establish schedules and strategies to meet the need for

increased learning time. The master schedule will incorporate an additional 30 minutes daily for the academic support of students. A summer Bridge program will begin in July 2011, providing additional time for 9th graders as they transition to high school.

The Southwest staff will be provided on-going, job-embedded professional development (e.g., regarding subject-specific pedagogy, instruction that reflects a deeper understanding of the community served by the school, or differentiated instruction) that is aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional program and designed with the school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement the school reform strategies for Southwest. Some examples of training will include Gifted Endorsement, AP Certification, Teaching in the Block, Literacy Training, Mathematics Training, Exemplars training, and training in infusing technology to transform learning.

The integration of technology into the core curriculum will be used as a method to offer differentiated, individualized and timely instruction. We anticipate transformation of the teaching and learning environment. The proposed technology tools and training are thoughtfully linked to research-based effective teaching practice. Professional learning opportunities will be focused on establishing and sustaining professional learning communities, collaborating during webinars, and discussing research within and across SIG schools, the state, the nation, the world.

In order to increase teachers' use of technology tools, we will ensure that the tools and the training are relevant and directly linked to the curriculum and that teachers are given time to practice with the technology. Since teachers as learners, as practitioners, and as individuals coping with change are more likely to use a technology tool when it is something they can use tomorrow within the context of a lesson, it is anticipated that they become more likely to think about how to integrate technology into other learning activities. Hence, teacher training will include basic technical knowledge about how to use a technology tool as well as knowledge about how to integrate the tool into their existing curriculum.

Technical Assistance and professional support will be on-going from the Central Office to the school. Professionals at all levels (central office staff, the school improvement specialist, principals, school-based academic coaches, and technology coordinators) will support teacher growth by actively participating and monitoring the job-embedded professional learning along the way. For example, having regular access to technology specialists during the planning and implementation process should lead teachers to feel more confident and supported when integrating technology in their teaching. It also will ensure that all relevant staff members are aware of decisions about technology as the school makes progress toward reaching the expressed goals which mesh with district visions for technology and learning.

Southwest High School will implement on-going mechanisms for family and community engagement. Such programs will include the adoption of the 360 Degree of Parent Engagement program with the support of the Georgia PTA and Title I. As a result, the staff will engage families and community representatives more frequently, more meaningfully, more intentionally, and more strategically to increase student learning at school, at home, and in the community.

Southwest High School will be given sufficient flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially-improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates. For example, teacher contracts will be extended as needed to assist with professional learning. Teachers' work-day will be extended for 2 days per week to allow for collaboration and planning. Practices and policies will be modified, if necessary, to enable the school to implement the interventions fully and effectively. Additional resources will be aligned with the interventions contained in the grant.

The plan for Southwest High School requires that processes, procedures, training, and collaboration take place to support capacity growth for the system and school staff. The plan for improvement outlined in the grant provides a platform of support for teacher professional growth, instructional improvements, innovative implementation of technology, student support for achievement, and leadership responsibility. The plan will be embedded into the school's Title I school improvement plan and will be on-going. The reform will be sustained after the funding period for the grant ends.