

Program Abstract

San Marcos High School (SMHS) with a student population of 1,890 is the only high school serving San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District (SMCISD), a 212 square mile district lying midway between Austin and San Antonio, Texas. Over 50% of the district's students are economically disadvantaged, and 65% are minority, primarily Hispanics of Mexican descent. SMHS student alienation and apathy is manifest through low attendance, high dropout rates, high failure rates, and unacceptable performance gaps between student groups. This proposed project will serve approximately 1,300 students in three small learning communities at SMHS: the Ninth Grade Center (NGC), an Academy for Visual and Performing Arts, and an Academy for Math, Science and Technology. The identified problems will be addressed through a number of strategies intended to provide additional academic support and career awareness activities for students, and professional development and extended planning time for teachers. A Teacher Advisory Program (TAP) will support success of all students in SMHS. Each teacher will be assigned 15-16 students to meet with daily, for a 35-minute period. This system will ensure that all students will have at least one caring adult who will be responsible for supervising their attendance, monitoring their social and academic progress, advising them about career decisions, and helping them obtain needed support throughout their high school careers.

Funds will be used at the NGC to improve professional development of teachers and provide academic support to all ninth graders. Funds also will be used to create the two Academies and provide the technical assistance and professional development needed to adopt a plan developed two years ago by a 57-member school/community task force. This plan was approved, but not funded due to a lack of resources, by the SMCISD Board of Trustees in 1999. This proposal incorporates district resources, private funding, and university support. However, without federal assistance, the likelihood of success is low. We have planned the use of funds requested to maximize delivery of services to students and professional development for teachers. Finally, SMCISD staff are confident they can achieve the goals identified in this proposal with the resources made available through this grant.