

PARTNERS FOR UNPARALLELED LOCAL SCHOLASTIC EXCELLENCE (PULSE) administered by the TEACH FOUNDATION

Summary

Project Success: The Center's decade of research provides the theoretical and pedagogical foundation for six Center-identified Standards for Teachers of Children of Poverty based on these themes: Life in Poverty, Language and Literacy, Family/Community Partnerships, Classroom Management, Curriculum Design/Instruction/Assessment, and Teachers as Leaders/Learners/Advocates. Delivery of standards-aligned outreach activities focused on 25 specific high-yield and goal-based strategies has been the major focus of Center efforts.

Demographics

- *Target Settings:* Rural
- *Target Groups Served:* Approximately 3,000 students in Hartsville, SC. Elementary schools: Southside Early Childhood Center, Thornwell School for the Arts, Washington St. and West Hartsville. High schools: Hartsville High School.
- *Districts Served:* Darlington

Research and Evaluation

What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative? Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works.

There are two key components of PULSE: 1) Accelerated Learning Opportunities (ALO), which provides high-level courses in science, math, language, and the arts for students that attend Hartsville High School; and 2) the Comer School Development Program (SDP) at four Hartsville elementary schools, Thornwell, Southside, West Hartsville and Washington. Mentor, summer reading, and after-school Boy Scout programs support the Comer SDP elementary school process.

ALO: ALO offers high school students advanced courses through collaborative teaching programs with the SC Governor's School for Science and Math and Coker College. Classes include Advanced Chemistry, AP Calculus AB, Robotics, AP Computer Science, Molecular Biology, Pre-Engineering and Mandarin Chinese I, II, and III through GSSM. Coker offers classes in art, music, theater and dance. Dual-credit is available in fine arts courses and Chinese. 841 high school students have been served in the dual-credit program to date. Over the 4 years of ALO AP Calculus course offerings, all ALO students passed the AP tests. Testing results from the first year in AP Calculus showed that 5 ALO Calculus students (50%) passed the AP exam with a score of 3 or higher; 2 of non-ALO students (13%) passed the exam. In the second year, 4 ALO-enrolled calculus students (100%) passed the AP exam. However, all 13 calculus students (100%) not enrolled in ALO did not pass the exam. In the third and fourth years, all ALO AP Calculus students (100%) passed the AP exam. ALO has expanded opportunities for students over the summer. Two high school ALO Advanced Chemistry students completed summer science projects funded by the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research and Institutional Development Awards, under the GEAR-RE (Research Experiences) program. Students re-wrote a computer program that is currently being used at Coker College's computer labs. Students excelled in the fine arts through Coker classes. Over 4 years, 6 voice students have earned superior ratings at the SC National Association of Teachers of Singing (SCNATS) state-wide competition. One student earned a scholarship to sing with the SC Sandlappers, a professional singing ensemble. Three students who have participated in the music program for the last three years, graduated in 2015. Two of them are currently pursuing music majors. The third student is pursuing a degree in bio-engineering with a music minor.

Comer SDP: The SDP enables educators, parents, families, and community partners to support development, integrate learning, and as a result, improve academic and behavioral outcomes for students. Current data shows a continuous improvement in student personal behavior. Classroom discipline referrals have shown a significant decrease in all Comer schools from 2011 to 2014. Thornwell decreased 13.5%; Washington decreased 23% and West Hartsville decreased 76%. Bus discipline referrals decreased in 2 of the schools from 2011 to 2014: Washington decreased 64% and West Hartsville decreased 84%. Suspensions decreased by at least 70% in all schools. Yale Child Study Center's Surveys indicate an increase from 2011 to 2014 in self-confidence, getting along with peers, and positive school climate as ranked by the students. A Comer program designed to address low math skills for students who ranked, "Not Met" on the 2014 Fall MAP test was conducted at Washington in the 4th year of the program. It served 27 students who consistently attended classes. Out of those: 15% began the program working on grade level; 41% ended the program working on grade level. There was an 18% average growth rate of students. The most compelling data is the academic improvement of students over the 4 years of Comer implementation. Students demonstrated a 12-point increase in reading skills and a 15-point increase in math skills.

Mentor Program: A school-based mentor program was established to support the Comer SDP which is held during school hours on campus. Mentors come from all facets of the community to volunteer their time. To date, 157 volunteers from the community have mentored 182 students.

Scoutreach: Scoutreach is an after-school program administered by the Pee Dee Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America and implemented in Comer schools in 2012. Scoutreach is a division of the Boy Scouts of America and gives special emphasis to rural and minority populations. Scouts earn badges, learn character-building and leadership skills, and follow Boy Scouts of America guidelines. School district personnel who are trained in the Comer SDP process serve as Den Leaders reinforcing the shared components inherent in both programs. The program serves 115 boys each year.

Summer Reading Camp: PULSE extended the impact of the Darlington County School District summer reading camp for 3rd graders by supporting K4-2nd graders. The camp serves 150 low performing students who are substantially not demonstrating reading proficiency at grade level. In 2014 the data reflected student gains up to a half-year's growth at the end of 6 weeks of instruction. The following year 37% of students were reading at grade level after 6 weeks of instruction.

Resources

- *Annual Cost:* \$1 million per year.
- *Funding Sources:* \$5 million grant paid over five years from Sonoco .
- *Staffing Needs:* Three program coordinators- PULSE coordinator for Darlington County School District, PULSE coordinator for Coker College and coordinator for SCGSSM.
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* None outside of the school setting.
- *Partner Organizations:* Darlington County School District, Coker College, South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, Sonoco and Yale University Child Study Center.

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Comer facilitator Tara King trains mentors

