

a. Title Of The Submission

Operation Assisted Sustained Investment in Students (OASIS)

b. Topic Area Of The Submission

Educational administration

Educational psychology

Elementary Education

Secondary Education

Cross-disciplinary areas of the above related to each other or other areas.

c. Two Or Three Keywords That Describe The Submission

Multicultural; Cultural identity; eliminate non educational variables; create schools as a one stop shop for students.

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Operation Assisted Sustained Investment in Students (OASIS)

Narrative

The National Significance

It is clear that the education afforded to ethnically diverse students is ineffective when one considers the high drop out rate, grade retention, and the over-representation of these students in special education classes. The overall dropout rate for African Americans in 1988 was 12.6 percent, and for Hispanics/Latinos, it was 32.2 percent in 1986 (Gay, 1993). Besides the social conditions that may foster poor school achievement, cultural discontinuity is also believed to be a major factor. Even ethnically and racially similar teachers may have a difficult time overcoming their training and professional orientation that is mostly Eurocentric. Takaki (19) notes that all public education curricula reflect the values and teachings of the founding fathers of the nation. The worldview, cultural identity, learning style, and social environment of the children in a classroom must be understood by a teacher to effectively educate the children. Culturally inconsistent information does not have a significant impact on the learner, since he or she does not have the anchors to place that information in its proper place. Most teachers do not teach ethnically/ culturally diverse students how to survive and succeed in school, for example, how to study across cultural learning styles, how to adjust talking style to accommodate school expectation, and how to identify and adjust to the procedural rules for functioning in different instructional classrooms.

Current research has documented that when students are taught in environments and with strategies that match their learning style; they achieve statistically higher test and aptitude scores and demonstrate better behaviors than when their styles are

mismatched with the environment or teaching strategy. Understanding worldview, cultural identity, learning differences in the educational environment can enhance student success in schools, can have an impact on reducing referrals to special education, decreasing low achievement, and lowering the high dropout rate among ethnically diverse students.

In most classrooms throughout the United States, teachers have clear and definite expectations of how student should behave, learn, communicate, and socialize. These expectations or norms are culturally determined, and they are reinforced by society. A Eurocentric orientation provides the framework for these expectations or norms, and the influence of this orientation is also apparent in the school curriculum, instructional strategies, and instructional materials used by American teachers. The project will focus on a culturally sensitive assessment strategy that includes an understanding of a child's worldview, cultural identity, learning style, along with culturally sensitive cognitive assessment when needed (Ibrahim, Ohnishi, & Wilson, 1994; Lonner & Ibrahim, 1996,).

The goals of the proposed three-year Howard University Project, **Operation Assisted Sustained Investment in Students, (OASIS)** are, in the first two years, (1) to coordinate, improve and extend educational, social, medical and psychological services to students, parents, teachers, and the community by developing a one-stop shop, (2) to create, implement, and evaluate models and delivering services that focus on understanding the implications of understanding educator and learner cultural identity and worldview, learning style, culturally sensitive cognitive assessment when needed, and implementing a learning model that focuses on enhancing the cultural and gender identity of the students through seminars and workshops for teachers, and school

counseling staff, (3) to disseminate these models and findings across the nation, and (4) to institutionalize this project at Howard University and in the surrounding communities in the District of Columbia. This project is based on several models that are currently being implemented in the field. The empowerment of learning from a developmentally consistent model to enhance gender and cultural identity development of each child, with an emphasis on a teaching style that matches and enhances the learner's style for learning (Ibrahim, 1994; Ibrahim 2000a, 2000b). In addition, when remedial educational assessment is needed a culturally sensitive approach to cognitive assessment will be used. This approach recognizes that behavior will vary within and between cultural groups in so far as there are differences in the experiences children bring to the testing situation. The community health facility will collaborate with the researchers and the targeted schools to provide services, that will include educational, psychological, emotional, and physical/medical services to students, parents, teachers, and the community to correct the imbalance that exists among underserved groups. What we propose can be successfully scaled up to larger urban and suburban communities. The project will have national impact on how we evaluate and teach our youth.

PURPOSE

The intent of Project **OASIS** is to provide students, parents, teachers, school support staff, and the community access to resources beyond the normal range of services provided to them in the school setting. Thus, it will be a natural extension of the community involvement and commitment that is the hallmark of Howard University, as an urban school, committed to the welfare of racial minorities and the oppressed. Our interventions will not be a "pull out" program whereby students are taken out of the

classroom to have services rendered to them. The services will be provided as a part of the curriculum embedded in the developmental guidance modules that guidance counselors and teachers will develop to make them culturally and gender sensitive. In addition, when needed, the cognitive assessment and other services medical and social services will be provided, before and after school, and on Saturdays. This project is unique in that it brings together several disciplines that will make a profound and positive difference in the attitudes, beliefs, and performances of parents, teachers, and students through the services provided. There is a need for a one-stop shop project because the education of teachers, administrators, and the parental understanding of the functions of schools, is necessary to insure that the students are educated to their fullest potential. Students must be allowed to learn as they build their identities and are empowered both ethically/culturally and from the perspective of their gender and learning style. Parents' and educators' ideas that conform to existing inequitable standards must be changed. These are some of the influential factors that are increasingly important in education. Teachers, administrators and students, have to work constantly in the schools to promote empowerment, self-sufficiency, accountability, and responsibility. On the other hand, it is essential that parents, and members of minority communities feel a greater sense of ownership and understanding of school standards if they are to participate in the education of their children. If students are to succeed in school and in life, they need to have effective coping strategies to successfully and proactively address the myriad challenges they face that often place them "at risk" for failure. Those individuals who play a crucial and significant role in students' lives-especially parents and teachers, also need to have effective coping skills, not only to facilitate student growth, development,

and life success, but also to enhance their own well being and coping as well. As educators, we must assume responsibility for helping to reverse the cycle of coping with internal and external stressors (i.e. low self-esteem, low sense of personal efficacy, low expectations from a cultural, gender, and class perspective etc.) to free poor children who are trapped in negative cycles in our society. In the past, designing and implementing programs for school, businesses, multi-state corporations, large and small community organizations, citizens' groups, fraternal organizations, and so on, have been involved in reversing the cycle of poverty. However, no studies have focused on collaborative efforts, such as is being proposed between the School of Education, School of Social Work, and the College of Medicine to provide services to promote student success.

Project Design

Project **OASIS** will serve elementary, middle, and high schools in the District of Columbia that have been identified as “target assisted” schools. Target assisted schools are schools in which the test scores of children are below the national level on the Stanford Nine. In some of these schools, over fifty percent of the children are on reduced or free lunch. A longitudinal study will be conducted. Forty-five families and their children in grades 3, 6, and 9 will be randomly selected: Fifteen from each grade level. These 45 families will be chosen from a community that has an elementary, middle and a high school feeder system. These 45 families will be given a pre and post survey to find out their worldview, cultural identity, learning style, and their views on education attainment, beliefs, attitudes toward education, desired expectations, aspirations, self esteem and motivation. The 45 families will be provided with services (stipends to go to medical dental, psychological support centers and monitored throughout the program).

Another group of 45 families (will serve as a control group) and will be randomly selected from the same schools used in this research and will be given the pre and post surveys but will not be provided services. Parents and children's scores on all the assessment tools, developmental screening tests, parent responses to a parenting skill questionnaire, and parents' scores on other tests (i.e. attitudes, expectations, aspiration etc.) will be analyzed using appropriate statistical analyses such as t-tests, analysis of variance and chi-square analysis.

Health Assessment - it is important to review the child's school records to determine that all is well physically. In addition, the caretaker will be asked about the child's medical history. This is important so that the child is not suffering from dietary deficiencies or any other ailments that can impede his/her functioning on the testing situation. The health examination must be done by a licensed physician, or evidence of such an examination in the form of a health certificate must be provided. This is important to rule out basic impediments to learning. This includes sensorial functioning: vision and hearing. Dental check up should also be done to rule out the possibility of dental pain being a depressing factor. Blood work should be done to insure the child is not anemic or suffering from dietary deficiencies. The issues of pain and anxiety related to menstruation should be explored. Finally, issues related around enuresis should be examined.

Linguistic Assessment- it is necessary to rule out if linguistic issues may be the contributing factor to cognitive delays, that is, does the child speak another language other than English, and therefore does not fully comprehend what is being said to him/her.

Family Issues- it is advised to explore what familial factors such as a recent divorce that may be affecting the child's performance in the clinical/school setting.

As a group, poor children are much more likely to weigh less when born; receive little or no health care; have high levels of lead in their blood (a condition that leads to irreversible learning disabilities and other problems); and having adequate nutrition during the critical years of brain development (Knapp and Shields, 1990). In addition to these physical disadvantages, once these children are old enough to attend school, they are faced with environmental "barriers" to high quality education. These barriers include high rates of mobility and high incidence of severe emotional or behavioral problems. Furthermore, in schools they encounter low staff morale and inadequate facilities (Knapp and Shields, 1990).

Too often, education for children who live in poverty is focused on "... what disadvantaged students lack... making it nearly impossible to see the strengths of individual students and of their communities" (Knapp and Shields, 1990). By focusing first on what they perceive to be students' deficits, educators risk making inaccurate assessment of children's strengths and weaknesses or the worst case, educators have low expectations for disadvantaged students and set standards that are not high enough to form the foundation for future academic success. From this perspective, students may be at a disadvantage because they come to school poorly prepared and teachers and administrators fail to diagnose and address their particular difficulties. (Knapp and Shields, 1990). Some of these barriers are deeply ingrained in the structure of society and can seem quite overwhelming for those hoping to improve the education of all children.

Project **OASIS** will provide strategies to establish “high expectations,” a school climate that supports academic learning, and work to strengthen the involvement of parents. The relationships between teachers and students and between schools and community have remained essentially unchanged and require changes involving personal redefinition of the way classroom teachers interact with the children and communities they serve. One of the crucial challenges facing urban schools is the mismatch between institutional norms of practice and the social and educational needs of today’s students. It is necessary to first, build positive models that foster resilience and protective systems for students, their families, and communities; second, to train principals to become visionary community leaders who serve as advocates for students and their teachers; third, to provide extensive long-term programs for teachers and counselors based on needs identified by teachers, parents and administrators and the community; and fourth to create highly visible community programs for parents and students that can be offered after school or on Saturdays and during the summer. As noted earlier, the purpose of Project **OASIS** is to establish a one-stop-shop community based program to provide educational, medical, psychological services to parents and students enrolled in a pilot program. Weekly meetings will be conducted with the parents to communicate services that are available to the community and teach them skills (i.e. survival/coping skills, parenting etc.) that will help their children to become successful. The social workers will assist parents to navigate the red tape to request the needed services. The medical personnel will help to insure that the participants have the physical and psychological readiness to help insure success in the classroom.

CULTURAL AND GENDER IDENTITY EMPOWERMENT: LEARNING

MODEL

The project will use a training approach for teachers, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, administrators, and caregivers, and other support personnel that focuses on empowering children from their cultural and gender identity perspective (Ibrahim, 1994; Ibrahim 2001a, 2001b). Since only empowered individuals can empower others, the training will first focus on enhancing and clarifying the cultural and gender identity of the staff and parents engaged in this project. Teachers and guidance counselors will be trained to develop developmental guidance modules that focus on identifying learning styles, cultural identity, and enhancing gender identity. These modules will be disseminated through the regular curriculum and opportunities to focus on empowerment of the learner will be used at every given opportunity. This project plans to bring three lines of research together, cultural/racial/ethnic identity, gender issues, and learning style to design learning modules that will be age appropriate for school children in elementary, middle and high school. Research supports the hypotheses that when education is culturally meaningful to the learner, the response is instantaneous recognition and acceptance of the material, instead of confusion and threat to identity and possibly loss of attention and focus, since the content is not meaningful (Aries & Moorehead, 1989; Ford, Harris & Schuerger, 1993; Marshall, 1994; Ortiz, Newcomb & Myers, 1994; Thompson, 1994).

The second aspect of the intervention will be assessment of worldview, cultural identity, and learning style of the students and the staff. The assessment will be used to assess the worldviews, cultural identities and learning styles of the educators, the students

and their parents. The staff will be trained to prepare culturally sensitive and learning style sensitive materials for teaching. The students will be pre and post-tested with the Scale to Assess World View (SAWV, Ibrahim & Kahn, 1984, 1987, Ibrahim & Owen, 1994), The Cultural Identity Check List (Ibrahim, 1990, 1993, 1999) and the Learning Style Inventory (1999) will be used only as a pretest. The children's grade point average for the previous year will be compared to the experimental years to assess changes and to gauge if the intervention was meaningful and had any impact. The educational intervention is called a "Curriculum to enhance the multicultural effectiveness of youth: Culture, gender, & class" (Ibrahim, 1992; Ibrahim, 1994; Ibrahim, 2001).

Project **OASIS** will offer educational, medical, psychological and social services to selected families. Seminars will be developed by experts from each of the areas mentioned above in collaboration with the school district. The seminars will focus on health and social issues, and factors that affect students who are placed at-risk; concentrate on parent, teacher and student behavior and its impact on the community. A concerted effort will be made to help parents become aware of the barriers that hinder the success of their children, and show them how to combat these barriers. Parents will be provided with information and training to help support their children academically, and influence their career and high school study plans. Teachers will be provided with the necessary methods and strategies to provide a supportive environment for all children. The intent of the seminars is to promote competence and achievement-oriented behavior, provide positive academic expectations, and offer opportunities for all students to increase their independence and responsibility to evaluate their own performance. The intervention approaches and strategies for conducting the seminars will be linked to

approaches in research and theory providing concrete examples to parents, teachers, and students. To understand students' classroom performance, teachers need to learn from their local communities what is valued and how it is taught. When educators involve parents as partners in their children's education, parents appear to develop a sense of efficacy that communicates itself to children with positive academic consequences.

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