

STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Compensatory Education Voices Together Project

Request

The State Board is requested to approve a service agreement with Voices Together for \$70,000 to implement a project with two local community colleges' Compensatory Education programs. The project will be for the period of February 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010.

Rationale For Contract

In September 2009, the North Carolina Community College System Office entered into a Service Agreement with Voices Together, a non-profit agency for professional services. Voices Together conducted a 6-week pilot program in two community colleges' Compensatory Education programs, to offer specialized programming and an integrated teacher-training component to increase learning in the classroom and decrease negative behaviors. Durham Technical Community College and Central Carolina Community College accepted the offer to participate in the pilot project. One other college, Wake Technical Community College was invited to participate in the pilot but they declined. Due to very limited funds only colleges in close proximity to the location of Voices Together were invited to participate in the pilot project. Collectively, seventy students were served between the two colleges, and a teacher's training guide was developed.

Voices Together is a specialized approach that integrates evidenced-based methodology into the structure of a small group chorus. The hour-long interactive sessions introduce individualized educational techniques for varied developmental needs, offer therapeutic group support, target speech/language goals, and provide social skill training.

There are no other equivalent organizations operating in the Triangle area of North Carolina, the state and possibly the country. The Voices Together technique and materials are proprietary and available only through the Voices Together program. The program was evaluated by the UNC-Chapel Hill Department of Special Education in 2008 with positive results.

The six week pilot project was a success and the participating students improved tremendously. The students communicated their feelings and needs to their instructors more and voluntarily in some cases. Their social interaction increased and they are not afraid to express themselves to one another and their instructors. Instructors have noticed a positive change in the students' behavior.

The project has had such a positive impact on the students and instructors in the Compensatory Education classes, until the North Carolina Community College System Compensatory Education Program is recommending that the Voices Together project be implemented in the two colleges for five months. The project will provide two components: Student instructional programming sessions and 3-two-day regional instructor training sessions.

- The student instructional programming sessions will meet twice a week for 1 hour, serving 8-10 students per session at each college.
- Regional instructor training sessions will be held in three regions of the state for two days per region. Thirty five different instructors will be served each day per region. It is anticipated that a total of 210 instructors will be served by Voices Together during the three regional training sessions. The training sessions will include a number of research based methodologies for training instructors, such as how to integrating social opportunities into the classroom; and using peer interaction and group engagement for increased independent problem solving, etc.

Method of Procurement

In accordance with the procurement practice of the State of North Carolina, approval was sought by outside purchasing authorities. The Division of Purchase and Contract has approved the contract.

Contract Amount and Time Period

Total amount of contract is \$70,000 for five months, February 1, 2010 through June 30, 2010.

Fund Source

Federal funds for the pilot project are provided by the United States Department of Education, through the Workforce Investment Act, Title II.

Contact

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