



October 15, 2013

Samuel Henry, Chair
Oregon State Board of Education
Oregon Department of Education
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310-0203

RE: OAR 581-018-0225 to 0250 "Closing the Achievement Gap for African American Students Grant"

Dear Chair and Members of the State Board of Education:

On behalf of Self Enhancement, and the children and families that we serve, we are pleased to support the establishment of the *Closing the Achievement Gap for African American Students Grant*. As a non-profit organization that has supported at-risk African American youth in reaching their fullest potential in Portland for more than thirty years, we have a keen understanding of how to best meet the unique needs of African American students. As a nationally-recognized youth development organization, we serve more than 7,500 young people and their families annually and serve as one of Multnomah County's foremost providers of wrap around services and education support to African American children. We urge the establishment of a grant with the specific purpose of recognizing the unique ability and role of non-profit organizations in closing the Achievement Gap of African American students in Oregon.

We have first-hand knowledge of what it takes to effectively cultivate achievement among African American students based on our experience using SEI's Academy, where more than 97% of students are African American and more than 85% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, as an incubator for our learning. We have validated our success at our Academy by being recognized as a "Model" school by the Oregon Department of Education this year. The establishment of this grant is critical to ensuring the continuation of non-profit organizations, such as Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI), providing culturally specific programming to support students and foster family engagement to increase the educational attainment of African American youth. As an organization, we have already made significant strides in closing the achievement gap of African American students by working to reverse declining high school graduation rates and helping youth to reach their fullest potential.

- 85% of program participants have 90% school attendance or greater
- 60% of program participants maintain a 2.5 GPA equivalent or above
- 85% of program participants have 0-1 behavioral referrals
- 90% of program participants obtain a high school diploma in 4 years
- 85% of program participants enter post-secondary education or employment
- 90% of program participants complete 2 years of Post-secondary education/work

We believe that the purpose of this grant is directly aligned with Governor Kitzhaber's 40/40/20 Plan and is consistent with the Equity Lens adopted by Oregon Education Investment Board. This grant recognizes the need to prioritize investments that ensure education disparities are addressed. We look forward to collaborating with the Oregon Department of Education in this work!

Sincerely,

Marcy Bradley
Executive Director, Self Enhancement, Inc.