

## **Section I:**

**Project Title:** Girls on Track

### **Project Summary:**

We are writing this grant to start a Girls on Track program which is part of the Girls on the Run organization. We would like to be able to provide the Girls on Track program for approximately forty of our at-risk teenage girls throughout the 2014-2015 school year. Girls on Track is a program that follows twenty four lessons over twelve weeks. The curriculum teaches life lessons through interactive running games. We would also like to provide Fitbits for tracking health and wellness for all of our teens to use while they are training. We know with a focus on health and wellness with the use of technology we will be more successful in helping our at-risk teenage girls.

### **Need**

#### **Research:**

In 2007 the Tucker Center Research Report found that “girls’ participation rates across all venues of physical activity (ie, organized sports, outdoor recreation, etc.) has decreased. Girls are twice as likely to drop out of sports at an earlier age when compared to boys.” According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, “Activity levels among girls declines from ages 8-9 to 18-19, with the sharpest declines occurring at the onset of adolescence.” In addition, the Cochrane Collaboration concluded that “exercise is moderately effective for reducing depressive symptoms, often as useful as medication or psychological therapy.”

The Women's Sports Foundation has conducted research on the link between academic success and sports for women and girls. Their research shows that:

- Girls who participate in sports are less likely to do drugs, less likely to get pregnant, and more likely to graduate from high school than those who do not play sports.
- Half of all girls who participate in sports have higher than average levels of self-esteem and less depression.
- 80 percent of women identified as key leaders in Fortune 500 companies participated in sports during their childhood.
- Women who are student athletes graduate at higher rates than women students generally.

For thirteen years I've been a school counselor and for almost my whole life I've been a runner. Personally I know the psychological benefits of running, being active and getting outside. I work with teens who struggle with anxiety and depression. As a result, these students eat poorly, do poorly in school and do not participate regularly in physical fitness. I've counseled many teenage girls and I've seen some change in behavior, but in order for my students to make a more permanent lifestyle change research shows that incorporating regular exercise into their daily routine is necessary. Girls on the Run is a program that is entering into its 20<sup>th</sup> year. This program is research based and the curriculum is already developed and is age appropriate for the middle school student.

Additionally 28% of our student population qualifies for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. This means there are approximately 200 of our students living beneath the poverty level. Students living in poverty need additional support and guidance to address the challenges they are faced with.

## **Goals**

Our goal is to develop a Girls on Track program at our school site that provides at-risk female students the tools they need to embrace their individual strengths and successfully navigate their life experiences.

1. Fall of 2014 register twenty female students who are identified as at-risk based on low grades, test scores, or lack of homework completion, or issues with attendance.
2. Train twenty girls to run a 5K race over a twelve week period using the Girls on Track curriculum.
3. Train girls to track their eating, sleeping and exercise using FitBit Flex.
4. Use IPAD FitBit application to help students set goals and track their goals over the twelve week period.
5. Spring 2015 register twenty more girls for the Girls on Track program who are identified "at-risk."

### **How this project will improve current instruction**

Female teenagers who struggle with symptoms of anxiety and depression need a lot of support . Typically these are teenagers who struggle with attendance issues, are struggling academically and have medical issues as well. If we can combine exercise and healthy living with counseling we feel that after twelve weeks we will have girls who will be more successful in the classroom.

### **How this program is innovative**

Girls on Track is innovative because we will be the first middle school in Orange County to develop a program like this. We also will be using technology through Fit Bits and IPADs to track and set goals which has not been done before with the Girls on Track program. In addition, the counseling team will be working with the Physical Education team weekly to address the needs of at-risk teenage girls.

### **How this program will be developed beyond your school**

As with all of the programs that we develop, we will share what we are doing with other counselors and administrators in the district through district-wide counseling meetings. We will also invite parents, counselors and administrators from other schools in the district to attend the 5k race as spectators and volunteers for the race.

### **Specify the number of students and the grade levels that will benefit annually from the project**

Forty female students will benefit from this program for the 2014-2015 school year. This is a program that can be sustained by this one time grant for years to come. Once our school becomes a Girls on Track school we will always be a site unless we decide to remove ourselves from the program.

### **Provide an estimated timeline for the project, including when you expect the program to begin, how long it will last, and when and how you anticipate assessing the program's effectiveness**

The Girls on Track program will start in the first week of October, meeting from 2:45-3:45 on Mondays and Wednesdays afterschool. The spring session will start the first week of March meeting on Mondays and Wednesdays afterschool from 2:45-3:45. Students in the program will meet weekly through tutorial to set goals and track goals.

We will assess program effectiveness by tracking grades, attendance, and behavior from the beginning of the training program and at the end of the training program.

## **Section II:**

### **How will this program benefit students**

This program will benefit our at-risk students by having them experience benefits of exercise, eating well, and sleeping well.

**Creative approach to school counseling**

The Girls on Track program is a creative approach to school counseling because it applies what we know about the benefits of exercise and counseling when they are combined. We will be the first counseling team to implement activities that engage students in exercise and group counseling.

**What quantitative and/or qualitative indicators will you use to assess the impact of the project on students?** We will use attendance, report cards and discipline records before the Girls on Track program and compare them to after the program is completed.

**What quantitative and/or qualitative indicators will you use to assess the impact of the project on guidance services and counselors at your school?** By comparing the number of Girls on the Run in our at-risk programs, such as manditorial, study skills, homework club, Reading Lab, Math Lab, and from the beginning of the twelve week program to the end of the program.

**Section III: Funding Request**

Fitbits:  $\$99 \times 22 = \$2178$

Registration for Girls on the Run race:  $\$25$  (Title 1 school reduced rate)  $\times 40 = \$1000$

iPad (including taxes):  $\$649.92$

Coaches training: Free

Curriculum: Free

First aid/ CPR training: Free

Total Amount requested:  $\$3,827.92$

**If we are not funded for the full amount:**

We could use alternative methods for registering the girls for the race if we are not funded fully.

Girls will be loaned a fitbit during the 12 week training and will return the fitbits after the training is completed. We do not anticipate future costs once we start this program.