

REACH FOR EXCELLENCE
APPLICATION SUMMARY

Jack & Anne Glenn Foundation Board Meeting

Family Representative:

Request Date:	February 2, 2021
Project Title:	Academic Support for Economically Disadvantaged Students in Metro Atlanta
Request Amount:	\$15,000.00
Program Area:	Education

Organization Information	Contact Person for Application
Reach for Excellence 3790 Ashford Dunwoody Rd Atlanta, GA 30319 Tel: (770) 936-6489 Fax: (770) 472-8402	Mr. Matt McGee Director of Development (770) 936-6489 mcgeem@reachforexcellence.org

Organization's annual operating budget: \$555,516.00

Background

Reach for Excellence prepares academically talented middle school students with limited opportunities and financial resources to succeed in challenging college preparatory high schools. Through three six-week summer sessions and three years of Saturday courses during the academic year, this 100% tuition-free program develops the educational, social, and leadership skills each student needs to succeed in high school, college, and beyond.

Reach for Excellence began in 2001 under the leadership of the Society of Mary. The program is an independent 501(c)3 governed by a volunteer board of directors.

Each spring, Reach for Excellence selects 30-35 academically gifted sixth-graders from metro Atlanta's underserved areas to begin the program. Any rising sixth-grade student of limited income (defined as \$50,000 or less) in the metro-Atlanta area, who is academically talented and interested in making the three-year commitment, can apply to the program. The average family income for our current Reach for Excellence students is just under \$30,000. Students are recommended by their teachers and selected in the spring of 5th grade. The Reach population is

exceptionally diverse and balanced in gender. Around 100 middle school students participate in Reach for Excellence each year. Reach for Excellence's current enrollment includes middle school students from DeKalb, Gwinnett, Fulton, and Rockdale counties.

The Reach for Excellence curriculum increases students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills in several core areas: Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Study Skills. Elective topics are offered in Visual Arts, Etiquette, Computers, and Business. Students also prepare to take the SSAT, the secondary entrance exam for all private schools. Students will take the SSAT twice during their tenure at Reach for Excellence, with the first test used as a benchmark to identify weak areas that need addressing and measure improvement from one year to the next.

Reach recruits and hires master teachers, making an effort to hire individuals whose experience enable them to serve as both faculty and role models. Students are introduced to high school options, both public and private, through field trips to campuses and admissions directors' visits. Reach provides two nutritious hot meals throughout the summer session and lunch at each Saturday session during the school year. Reach for Excellence offers transportation to and from the program in the form of Marta cards and Reach's own buses to ensure that distance is not a barrier for any child.

Now in its 20th year, the program boasts 435 graduates. 100% of the graduates attend high school, and 94% of college-age Reach graduates are enrolled in a college or university. These percentages far outpace high school graduation and college attendance rates in Georgia, particularly for students from low-income families. Reach continues to track students beyond graduation to determine the level of education completed and current employment status.

Project/Program Budget (if applicable): \$555,516.00

Project/Program Title: Academic Support for Economically Disadvantaged Students in Metro Atlanta

Statement of Need

The dropout rate in Georgia makes the value of a program like Reach for Excellence even more evident. While most students drop out at the high school level, studies conducted by the Department of Education indicate that the disengagement process begins much earlier. It is why we feel that reaching students in their middle school years is crucial, particularly students from low-income families where the dropout rate is even higher. Research from Johns Hopkins University found that “during the middle grades, students in high-poverty environments are either launched on the path to high school graduation or knocked off-track.” Research from

ACT found that the level of academic achievement a student attains by eighth grade significantly impacts college and career-readiness.

Our current Reach for Excellence students' average family income is under \$30,000 for a family of four, or just above the Federal Poverty Line for 2020. Reach for Excellence students primarily attend schools in the DeKalb County, Gwinnett, Fulton, Rockdale, and Atlanta Public School Districts. The Georgia Department of Education's College and Career Ready Performance Index for 2019 reports that less than 50% of economically disadvantaged students meet college and career readiness standards in these districts. The CCRPI also says that high school graduation rates among economically disadvantaged students remain below 90%. The high school graduation rate among economically disadvantaged students in DeKalb county (home to over 50% of Reach for Excellence students) dropped to 69% in 2019.

Reach for Excellence engages young scholars in academic and leadership enrichment classes over six weeks during our summer sessions. The program continues throughout the school year during 16 Saturday sessions. Two hot meals are provided each day in the summer, and a hot lunch is provided on Saturdays, ensuring that students are well-fed and ready to learn. Reach for Excellence also provides transportation assistance to and from our campus at Marist School in Brookhaven so that travel is not a barrier to any child's success.

The program requires hard work, commitment, and discipline, but the rewards can last a lifetime. When students join Reach for Excellence, they form a community of like-minded young people who strive to better their opportunities in the classroom and life.

The Reach for Excellence program costs approximately \$5,000 per year per student or \$15,000 per child for all three years. This cost includes meals, books, supplies, transportation, and more. Our program is 100% tuition-free. Our ability to set at-risk youth on the path to high school graduation and college is entirely dependent on the generosity of individual philanthropists and foundations. A \$15,000 grant from the Jack and Anne Glenn Foundation would fund the annual cost of a life-changing educational experience for three young people currently enrolled in our program.

Detailed Project/Program Description

Reach for Excellence is an educational enrichment program for the underserved middle school students of Atlanta that runs for three consecutive summers and three years of Saturdays during the school year. The goal is to develop the academic, social, and leadership skills necessary for students to succeed in a college-prep high school and stay on the path to college.

Each spring, Reach for Excellence selects 30-35 academically gifted sixth-graders from the underserved areas of metro Atlanta to begin participating in the program. Reach for Excellence

students attend middle schools throughout DeKalb County, Fulton County, Rockdale, and Gwinnett County. Their teachers recommend them for acceptance to our program in the spring of 5th grade. Current families in the Reach for Excellence program have an average annual income of \$28,171 for a family of 4. The Reach student population is exceptionally diverse and balanced in gender. Around 100 middle school students participate in Reach for Excellence each year.

In addition to academic enrichment, Reach for Excellence provides students with a hot breakfast and lunch. Reach for Excellence also offers transportation to and from the program in the form of Marta cards and Reach's buses to ensure that distance is not a barrier for any child.

Reach for Excellence students learn from adults who are caring mentors and are surrounded by friends who share their desire to succeed. Reach for Excellence employs master teachers who offer a rigorous academic and leadership curriculum. The average class size is 12 students allowing for more one-on-one instruction. The Reach for Excellence curriculum prepares students to excel by increasing their core competencies and deepening their intellectual curiosity. Our curriculum improves students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills in several core areas: Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Study Skills. Elective topics are offered in Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Etiquette, Computers, Physical Fitness, and Business. Extra-curricular activities in team-building and community service participation expose students to leadership opportunities and the value of giving back to their community.

Students also prepare to take the SSAT, the secondary entrance exam for all private schools. Students will take the SSAT twice during their tenure at Reach for Excellence, with the first test used as a benchmark to identify weak areas that need addressing and measure improvement from one year to the next. Students are introduced to high school options, both public and private, through field trips to campuses and admissions directors' visits.

Our ultimate goal is to equip graduates with the tools they need to succeed in college-preparatory high school and beyond. Our staff continues to counsel our alumni through high school and into college. Now in its 20th year, the program boasts 435 graduates. 100% percent of graduates attend high school. 94% of Reach graduates have matriculated to college. These percentages far outpace high school graduation and college attendance rates in Georgia, particularly for low-income students.

Evaluation and Sustainability

Reach for Excellence evaluates our program using the following measures:

Attendance at Academic Enrichment – Each student will receive 46 days of academic enrichment with certified teachers. RFE requires a 90% attendance rate. The majority of the

students report that being in RFE helps them academically, and they enjoy all of the opportunities offered.

SSAT Scores - During the program, students will participate in two sessions of the SSAT. Reach for Excellence will compare the first and second SSAT scores to measure progress in each subject area and track improvement over three years. These scores also help staff advise students on what high schools would be a good fit for their abilities and interests.

Grades - Students must submit each quarter's report card from their current middle school to the Executive Director. A student not meeting their potential may be placed on an individual academic improvement plan.

High School Matriculation – Students will matriculate to the college-prep High School of their choice. Matching students to the college prep program of their choice that is an appropriate personal fit is part of the formula for success.

College Matriculation - Reach graduates, upon completing high school, will enroll in college. Currently, 94% of college-age Reach graduates are enrolled in a college or university.

Funding Sources

In the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year, Reach for Excellence received operational support from over 150 donors, including the following lead donors:

The Society of Mary

Nordson Corporation Foundation

The Patterson Family Foundation

Sartain Lanier Family Foundation

UPS Foundation

DeKalb County Human Services Grant

Yardi Systems, Inc.

Reach for Excellence is supported by The Society of Mary and receives our campus facilities in the form of an in-kind gift from Marist School. All other funding is solicited from individuals, corporations, and foundations on an annual basis. In 2020, Reach for Excellence received a generous gift to establish a restricted endowment. Interest and gains from these invested funds may supplement revenue for operational support upon board approval.

**Reach for Excellence Budget
2020-2021**

		Proposed
PROGRAM STAFF SALARIES	<i>Executive Director: \$101,033</i>	\$176,033
	<i>Director of Development: \$75,000</i>	
PROGRAM STAFF BENEFITS		\$58,580
FACULTY SALARIES	<i>9 Saturday Teachers@ \$150 / day x 16 Sessions = \$21,600</i>	\$78,600
	<i>10 full-time Summer Teachers@ \$5,100 / Summer = \$51,000</i>	
	<i>Faculty Payroll Processing and FICA= \$6,000</i>	
STUDENT INTERNS	<i>3 College Interns@ \$2,000 / Summer: \$6,000</i>	\$6,000
FACILITY	<i>Use of Marist School facility including classrooms, cafeteria, athletic fields, pool, gyms, and office space, equipment, and insurance premiums donated in kind</i>	\$116,623
FOOD	<i>Summer Breakfast & Lunch: \$13 / person x 115 people x 30 days = \$44,850</i>	\$57,360
	<i>Saturday Session Lunch: \$7.00/ person x 100 x 16 = \$11,200</i>	
	<i>Parent Workshop: \$410</i>	
	<i>Graduation Reception: \$900</i>	
TRANSPORTATION	<i>Maintenance of 4 passenger busses, Gas, Tag and Title: \$3,000</i>	\$12,700
	<i>Charter Service: \$2,000</i>	
	<i>Teacher/ Driver Stipend: \$6,700</i>	
	<i>MARTA passes/tokens – yearlong: \$1,000</i>	
SUPPLIES / BOOKS	<i>Teacher Supplies/ Reach books: \$2,000</i>	\$5,000
	<i>General program supplies: \$3,000</i>	
FIELD EXPERIENCES	<i>Curriculum-based Field Experiences: \$5,000</i>	\$5,000
HIGH SCHOOL PLACEMENT	<i>Independent School Application Fees: \$1,000</i>	\$2,000
	<i>SSAT Preparation: \$1,000</i>	
MARKETING/PUBLIC RELATIONS	<i>Web Maintenance: \$3,000</i>	\$12,000
	<i>General Marketing: \$2,000</i>	
	<i>Special Event: \$7,000</i>	
PRINTING	<i>T-Shirts: \$500</i>	\$2,500
	<i>Letterheads, brochures, newsletters: \$2,000</i>	
ACCOUNTING	<i>Annual Audit and 990: \$7,700</i>	\$7,700
TRAVEL	<i>Conferences: \$500</i>	\$500
DUES / FEES		\$1,000
MOBILE TELEPHONE	<i>\$60/ Month: \$720</i>	\$720
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT – EXPENSE ACCOUNT	<i>\$500</i>	\$500
OTHER	<i>Graduation gifts: \$1,200</i>	\$12,700
	<i>Operating Reserve: \$10,000</i>	
	<i>Teacher and Intern Appreciation: \$1,500</i>	
OVERALL OPERATING EXPENSES		\$555,516



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