

Sabin New Approach Motivate Students



(L-R) A.C. Williams, Jimmy Walker and Barnett Jenkins

Photo by Richard J. Brown

by Jerry Garner

In an effort to motivate students in hopes of increasing their achievement levels, the Portland School District has implemented a pilot program at Sabin Elementary School. The program is called the Sabin Demonstration School Project. "The project seeks to answer the critical question: How can we motivate and support these students with unique needs and abilities from diverse cultural backgrounds and close the achievement gap that threatens the future of many individual children and our society as a whole?" said Lurlene Shamsud-Din, program coordinator.

Shamsud-Din said the program is a self-esteem, motivational program that tries to increase their achievement level. She said there are 30 students in the program, two-thirds are minority students and one-third are other ethnic groups.

Two-thirds of the students are achieving below grade level and one-third are above grade level. "One of the reasons why we have a mix, is so stu-

dents who are in this program won't be perceived by people and by students as non-learners."

One unique feature of the program is that students have input as to who will be in the program, along with teachers. The program allows students with unique needs and abilities to link their educational experience to a strong sense of who they are and what they can do as they relate to others in school and within their families, as well as the greater community. Students in the program are linked to a member of the community.

Key elements of the program are:

- Mentors/models and parents as supporters of the students desire and ability to learn.
- A self-manager program that helps students take increased responsibility for setting and attaining learning and behavior goals.
- Computer adaptive testing: An innovative, continuous student pro-

gress assessment system.

- Targeted instruction and support focused on student academic and attitudinal needs and abilities.
- Journals.

Shamsud-Din said Dan Stanton, a teacher at Sabin, designed the program. "Dan decided that students could become motivated by studying things that interest them, and, knowing that all kids could benefit from it, he developed the pilot program." She also credited Ron Herndon, co-Chairman of the Black United Front, for the program's implementation. Shamsud-Din said Herndon approached Portland School Superintendent Matthew W. Prophet, and other educators, about doing something about Black male students because their self-esteem was low.

Shamsud-Din said she has seen the value of the program already in the progress of some of the students.

The program is designed for fourth- and fifth-graders. "We must recognize kids with bad learning habits before they enter middle school, before they are totally lost," Shamsud-Din said. She said this is the reason students are paired with mentors; to help them think about those things, to help motivate them and expose them to other things in the community.

Shamsud-Din said the project is a pull-out program where students are in class a minimum of three hours a week and on Mondays and Fridays they're in exploration time. The pilot program has been recognized for its effort and commitment to educational excellence.

The National Alliance of Black School Educators of Oregon is looking at the project as a demonstration model for the nation in educating children. Shamsud-Din said next year the program will be expanded. She said Dr. Prophet supports the program and will become a mentor in the project.

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