

ABSTRACT

Cabarrus County Schools' i3 development project, **EMPOWER: Expanding Magnet Program Options, Widening Educational Reach**, addresses **Absolute Priority 1** (*Promoting Diversity*) and will serve an estimated 10,008 students. Located in the south-central region of North Carolina, CCS' student demographics are 56% Caucasian, 20% African-American, 16% Hispanic, 4% multi-racial, and 4% Asian. Our strong theory is that establishing a continuum of high-quality K-12 magnet programs intentionally placed in high-need areas, combined with the layering of innovative non-cognitive, socio-emotional, and academic supports and services (**Invitational Priority**), will increase academic achievement and educational attainment outcomes while decreasing the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic isolation of students attending our lowest-performing schools. Creating more diverse learning communities and providing rigorous, relevant, career-focused curricula, and academic and socio-emotional supports to help students succeed, will increase our students' academic achievement, and boost their odds for post-secondary success in the diverse global economy of the 21st Century. EMPOWER goals include: 1) Revise policies to promote magnet school expansion and pipeline persistence; 2) Deliver professional learning to increase rigor and cultural responsiveness; 3) Provide students with socio-emotional, academic, and non-cognitive supports; and 4) Engage families early and throughout their child's academic career. Expected outcomes include: expanded enrollment and diversity in magnet schools, creation of and greater student retention in K-12 magnet pipeline, increased teacher rigor and cultural responsiveness, enhanced school climate, increased academic achievement, increased diversity of participation in honors and AP, and increased parent engagement. Our project partners include The Cannon Foundation, the Hayes Charitable Trust, Discovery Place Education Studio, UNC-Charlotte, and VIF International Education.