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## Program good fit for Lanier students

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Thirty freshmen at Lanier High School are about to hit somewhat of a lottery.

The Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation is bringing the west Jackson school an experiment designed to improve classroom performance while offering hourly stipends and bonuses to "at-risk" students.

"It's a great program," said Lanier Principal Stanley Blackmon, who will select the participants. "We are all for anything that's going to bring opportunities for our students. We need all the help we can get."

The computer-based program, called the Quantum Opportunities Program, or



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QOP, will be a partnership among the Washington, D.C.-based Eisenhower Foundation, the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation and Lanier. Eisenhower officials said the foundation will invest \$155,000 a year in the Jackson Medical Mall Quantum Opportunities Program for four years.

The program's most attractive element is its effectiveness.

### **Keeping track**

The QOP model has been around since 1989. The Ford Foundation funded the pilot, which was rolled out in San Antonio, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Oklahoma City and Saginaw, Mich.

Why Jackson? "We really think that it's best to find communities with the synergy already in motion," Johnnie Gage, Eisenhower's chief operational officer.

Gage and others are set to be in Jackson today to announce the local effort.

The program will track students entering their freshman year through graduation. In Jackson, 60 students will be involved in the research — the program participants, or associates, and 30 others who will be the control group.

While the program's chief goal is to improve academic performance, it also hopes to establish long-term relationships and encourage community involvement.

The associates will engage in 250 hours per year in education, development and community service.

"We believe these children will benefit a lot," said Ollye Shirley, a former Jackson School Board member who will serve as program coordinator.

An evaluation of the QOP pilot by the Promising Practices Network on Children, Families and Communities suggests Shirley is right.

### **Impressive results**

By the program's second year, average test scores for associates were higher than the control group in five of 11 categories. By program's end, test scores were higher in all 11 areas. The associates were more likely to graduate, more likely to enter college and less likely to become teen parents.

"By all indication, and I'm not talking hyperbole, I'm talking about research and numbers, the

program is extremely successful," said C. Benjamin Lattimore, who directs the Office of National Literacy Programs for the Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America.

Clearly, this looks like a nice benefit for Lanier and the 30 students who will participate. What about the students who will make up the control group?

"We like to start with a small group to show the program's effectiveness," Gage said. "Then you can showcase the results and get a much larger program."

Great. As Blackmon said, Lanier, as well as many other schools, can use the help.