Graduation and Collaboration Coaches: Working Effectively Together

Laura Brown and Fran Bay
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The Hard Facts in Georgia...

- 86% of Georgia inmates do not have a high school diploma.
- 94% of students who dropout will be rejected for a job.
- In 2006, more than 2,000 Georgia students dropped out of school...

BEFORE THE 8TH GRADE.
Who Is Dropping Out in Georgia?

40% Female
60% Male

72% Econ Disadv
23% SWD
5% LEP

9th grade 7,001
10th grade 5,589
11th grade 4,832
12th grade 3,308
Georgia’s Graduation Coach Initiative
The Graduation Coach Initiative

- 2006-2007: The Georgia General Assembly appropriated grant funding for the purpose of hiring a full-time graduation coach in each Georgia high school to be engaged in a process of providing assistance to all high school students, individually and in groups, regarding high school graduation.

- To fund this initiative, the General Assembly appropriated $15,829,069 to provide a base salary and benefits to support Georgia high schools employing a graduation coach.
The Graduation Coach Initiative

- 2008 - 2009: The Georgia General Assembly appropriated grant funding for the purpose of hiring a full-time graduation coach in each Georgia middle school and in Georgia high schools with graduation rates less than 95%.

- To fund this initiative, the General Assembly appropriated approximately $51 million dollars to provide a base salary and benefits to support Georgia high schools and middle schools employing a graduation coach.

- School Participation: 445 Middle School Coaches, 402 High School Coaches
The Graduation Coach Initiative

- 2009 - 2010: The Georgia General Assembly moved funding for graduation coaches from a grant to part of the state QBE funding formula, allocating funds for the purpose of offsetting austerity cuts or hiring a full-time graduation coach in each Georgia middle school and high school.

- To fund this initiative, the General Assembly appropriated approximately $53 million dollars to provide a base salary and benefits to support Georgia high schools and middle schools employing a graduation coach.
The Graduation Coach Mission

- Ensure the successful transition of all students from elementary to middle school, middle to high school, and high school to post-secondary education or the workforce.
- Provide comprehensive prevention/ intervention programs for students at risk of grade retention and/or dropping out of school.
- Identify students in need of additional support and work with them to achieve academic and social success.
- Ensure that all identified students receive the resources and services needed to guide them toward graduation.
The Graduation Coach Initiative

What Characteristics Define an At-Risk Student?

1. Individual Factors
2. Family Factors
3. Peer Factors
4. Community Factors
5. School Factors

Source: National Dropout Prevention Network (dropoutprevention.org)
The Graduation Coach Initiative

School Risk Factors

- Low academic skills and achievement
- Retention
- Course failures
- Behavior/disciplinary problems
- Poor attendance
- Large schools/large classes
- Lack of guidance/advisement
- Inappropriate/ineffective instruction
- School located in high violence/crime area

Source: National Dropout Prevention Network (dropoutprevention.org)
Graduation Coach Duties and Responsibilities

- **Advisement** – using best practices models
- **Transitions** – collaboration between middle school and high school graduation coaches AND elementary, middle and high school staff
- **Awareness** – catching students already at risk of dropping out before and during high school
- **Parent Connections** – keeping parents involved in their child’s education at the age when parents begin to become more disengaged
Roles and Responsibilities

• Identify Students with High Risk Factors
• Develop Graduation Team(s) to Generate Support
• Implement School-wide Support and Interventions
• Provide Direct Service and Case Management

• Develop Relationships with Parents/Guardians, Community Organizations, and Other Resources
## Aligning Roles and Responsibilities

### Aligning Dropout Prevention Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role &amp; Responsibilities</th>
<th>Brief Description of Activities</th>
<th>Brief Description of Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identify Students with High Risk Factors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilize research-based risk factors to identify students at risk of dropping out of school. These risk factors include (but are not limited to):</td>
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<tr>
<td>• History of school failure, retention, and/or overage for grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Low CRCT scores, reading, and/or math achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Failure of core courses, GHSGT and/or EOCT</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Special education/disability</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Attendance problems/truancy</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Behavioral problems, history of suspensions, high-risk peer group</td>
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Successes of the Initiative

Today, more than 700 graduation coaches serve Georgia middle and high schools, offering intervention services to support the personal and academic needs of nearly 100,000 at-risk Georgia students.
Preparation of Graduation Coaches

- Graduation Coaches must hold a credential issued by Georgia’s Professional Standards Commission
- B.S. degree from accredited 4 year institution
- 3 years of successful experience working with students
Successes of the Initiative

In 2008-2009 alone, graduation coaches put into place more than 872,400 interventions and documented nearly 24 million contact hours of work with students.

Graduation Coaches have come to represent a caring adult role model.
Due in great part to the work of Georgia’s graduation coaches, the state's preliminary graduation rate for the 2008-2009 school year is 77.8 percent – a record for the state.
Georgia’s Graduation Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Interval</th>
<th>Graduation Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>65.40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>69.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>70.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>72.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>75.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>77.80%</td>
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* Denotes preliminary graduation rate prior to summer graduates
Successes of the Initiative

Since the program’s inception, the state of Georgia has seen the graduation rate increase statewide not just overall, but among every student subgroup.
Successes of the Initiative

The state of Georgia recorded 2,474 fewer dropouts in 2007 and 2,140 fewer dropouts in 2008 for a total of 4,614 fewer dropouts since the program’s inception.

Based on the 2007 Bureau of Statistics calculations, the additional 8,277 Georgia students who graduated during the 2007-2008 school year alone have the potential to add more than $75 million dollars in revenue per year to the state’s economy.
GraduateFIRST Goals

helping Georgia’s students with disabilities stay in school and graduate

• Increase graduation rate for students with disabilities who receive a general education diploma

• Decrease the dropout rate for students with disabilities
Collaboration Coaches

Extend the work of Graduation Coaches by helping students with disabilities and their families navigate the maze of resources available ensuring access to the resources and support at the school and in the community.
Behavior

Academic Performance

Attendance

Self-Determination

Belonging

Relationships

Family and Community Engagement

Georgia Department of Education’s State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network at Clemson University

Solutions to the Dropout Crisis
Essential Questions

- What are the critical gaps to address?
- What EBPs best address the need?
- What is my plan of action?
- Who drops out and why?
- Is it working?
- Am I implementing with fidelity?
- What do I need to change?
- Did I reach my target?
- What do I need to change?
- Did I reach my target?
Scaling Up GraduateFIRST

- **Pilot**
  - 17 High Schools

- **Cohort I**
  - 34 High Schools & the Feeder Middle Schools

- **Cohort II**
  - 90 High Schools and Middle Schools
  - Collaboration Coaches work with Team Leaders at each school
Success of GraduateFIRST

Rabun High School Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>SWD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>31.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>72.7</td>
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Successful Framework

- Awareness Training Sessions on Dropout
- Relationship & Team Building
- Coaching & Fidelity Checks
- System and School support of project
- Preventing Dropout
- Celebration of Success

Phase 1: Analyze Data
Phase 2: Identify Target Areas for Intervention
Phase 3: Develop Improvement Plan
Phase 4: Implement, Monitor, and Evaluate
North Gwinnett High & Lanier Middle Schools Share Success
Psychological Engagement

Associated with a wide-range of variables:

- Problem behaviors and delinquency
- Academic performance
- Educational adjustment
- Attendance
- Accrual of credits
- Level of educational attainment
- Social competency
- Persistence with school
- Student perceptions of future opportunities open to them

(Christenson et al., in press)
So...what does a Graduation Coach or Collaboration Coach need to make a difference?
Graduation & Collaboration
Coaches Need

- Data Collection Tools
- Data Analysis Tools
- Evidence-Based Practices
- Professional Development
- Professional Learning Communities
- Effective Models
To be successful, Graduation Coaches and Collaboration Coaches need to understand

- Why their students drop out of school
- Who is at-risk of dropping out
- Which intervention strategies are most effective for helping students stay in school and graduate

3 W’s
Professional Development Needed to Assist With…

• Analyzing data from various sources including attendance data, behavioral reports, and course pass rates as well as state testing results, graduation and dropout rates for their schools

• Promoting student engagement through developing individual relationships with students and parents
...and more professional development for

- Targeting students at-risk
- Matching evidence-based practices to identified needs
- Implementing programs to meet academic, behavioral, and affective needs
- Mentoring, monitoring, & advocating
- Building a sense of community
Attending to the seeds of dropout