NATIONAL DROPOUT PREVENTION NETWORK

2015 Crystal Star Awards of Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention

2015 National Dropout Prevention Network Conference
San Antonio, Texas
October 25-28, 2015
Mr. R. Keeth Matheny has taught on the high school, junior college, college, and graduate school levels. He is a strong advocate for the support of all students and especially at-risk students. In his district, Keeth championed the development of a freshman support program that has had remarkable results on student achievement and positive school climate as well as a dramatic reduction in discipline issues at multiple schools. He has helped to create a safer learning environment for all students, dramatically expanded the use of active learning methods of instruction to better reach all students, and led many professional development sessions promoting best practices for teaching and working with at-risk students.

Mr. Matheny has been the driving force behind the creation, implementation, and promotion of Austin Independent School District’s MAPS program (Methods for Academic and Personal Success). The course is designed to support freshmen as they transition into high school by teaching skills to help them succeed in school, mentorships, and promotion of Austin Independent School District’s MAPS program (Methods for Academic and Personal Success). The course is designed to support freshmen as they transition into high school by teaching skills to help them succeed in school, relationships, the workforce and life. Over a four-year period, the MAPS program has helped to reduce freshman course failures at Austin High School by 41%, dropouts by 30%, and discipline referrals by 71%.

Mr. Matheny has led professional development sessions for hundreds of teachers in Austin Independent School District in his support role with the AISD Dept. of Social and Emotional Learning. In addition to work training in AISD, he has trained teachers and schools in Fort Worth, Bastrop, Lexington (KY), Chicago, Santa Fe (NM), New York City, and Washoe County (NV). His work in Washoe has been very influential in helping develop SEL programs for eight high schools including more than 800 staff and serving over 15,000 students.

Mr. Matheny has also participated in events to promote national implementation of Social and Emotional Learning. He has been a speaker at many national conferences and the U.S. Congressional Briefing on Social and Emotional Learning in April of 2014.

Keeth’s energy and passion can’t be captured on paper because it lives in the hearts and minds of the groups he speaks to and students he teaches. He wears his heart on his shoulder and students quickly see his genuine love for them, which allows him to have a powerful impact in their lives.

Dr. Joseph Hendershott is an exceptional educator who focuses first and foremost on the actual individual needs of students. He understands with crystal clarity that the key to any child’s success as a student requires that schools at every level be staffed with highly trained, empathetic teachers with the skills to welcome, nurture, and guide young people with a wide range of background experiences, many of whom have come from abusive situations. Joe has an extensive background working with difficult and troubled youth in the school system. He has been a high school assistant principal, head principal, alternative school principal and principal at Boys' Village School (residential treatment facility).

Joe has presented at national educational conferences as well as staff training/professional development events on understanding and working with wounded or at-risk students, emotional literacy, empathy, esteem, inclusive communities, and other topics relevant to today’s educational climate. He has devoted his professional and private life to the development, coordination, and implementation of programs that provide educational professionals, parents, and community groups with the training to keep dropout-prone students in school and on the road to academic success. As Director of Field Experiences for Ashland University, Joe instills passion and empathy in the lives of future teachers as well.

Dr. Hendershott has authored two books, Reaching the Wounded Student, and soon to be released, Seven Ways to Transform Wounded Students.

Joe and his wife, Dardi, are co-founders of Hope 4 The Wounded Educational Seminars, LLC. They have nine children (6 girls and 3 boys) ranging in age from 4 to 25 years old. They are also licensed foster/adoptive parents and have adopted from foster care, Ethiopia, and the China special needs program.

For years, Joe has been involved with the National Dropout Prevention Network. In recent years, he has been a featured, pre-conference, and keynote speaker at NDPC/N conferences. His message of “Reaching the Wounded Student” has impacted the lives and changed the practice of many educators nationwide. As a national speaker and trainer, Joe travels throughout the country, calling for an educational approach that will move wounded students toward the path of healing. Through his impact with educators, the ripples of his message have affected countless students.
The Owasso Ram Academy is the alternative high school for the Owasso Public School District and serves as the district’s dropout intervention/prevention/recovery program. In 2009 the Owasso Ram Academy was recognized by then Oklahoma State Superintendent Sandy Garrett and the Oklahoma State School Board “for exemplifying excellence in alternative education.”

The Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma State Legislature require that alternative schools in Oklahoma build and maintain their programs based on 17 research-based components. Each year this program receives “highly effective” ratings from external evaluators based on these 17 criteria. On average, the Owasso Ram Academy graduates 35-45 students per school year. Students are required to earn 23 credits and meet ACE requirements by taking seven end of instruction tests and scoring proficient on a minimum of four tests. For the 2014-2015 school year, 97% of eligible students met this criteria for graduation.

The relationships between students and staff last long after graduation as evidenced by the number of graduates who continue to visit years later. Ram Academy works hard to ensure that students see and experience the connection between the classroom and the real world.

The Leader in Me is an excellent illustration of school-community collaboration, the second of 15 effective strategies purported by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network as effective in dropout prevention. The program was brought to the school district through the Vicksburg-Warren County Chamber of Commerce and continues to be funded by community sponsors.

The Leader in Me is based on the popular book, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen Covey. The program is designed to teach children these habits and make them more successful in school and more prepared for after-school life. The 7 Habits is a synthesis of universal, timeless principles of personal and interpersonal effectiveness such as responsibility, vision, integrity, teamwork, collaboration, and renewal, which are secular in nature and common to all people and cultures. Ms. Tammy Burris, Principal of Bowmar Elementary School says, “We have created a stronger desire to lead themselves, and we’ve increased expectations for [students’] behavior. The adults also lead themselves with the 7 habits, and we’re seeing life changes. We are more than test scores at our school; we’re here to help our students become productive citizens for success in life. Because of The Leader in Me, which we started in 2012, we are seeing great results and the impact is growing.”

The Vicksburg Warren School District currently implements The Leader in Me program in seven elementary schools and is increasing support to expand the program to the junior high schools.

Crystal Star of Excellence Awards: Requests for 2016 Nominations

A program or individual from your state could be a prestigious Crystal Star of Excellence Awards winner in 2016 but only if you make a nomination. The forms are available on the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network Web site, www.dropoutprevention.org. The deadline for nominations is July 1, 2016.

The award categories are Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention for Individuals and Programs; Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention for Individual and Programs for Students with Disabilities; and Distinguished Leadership and Service to the National Dropout Prevention Network.

All award winners will be honored at the 28th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference in Detroit, Michigan, October 2-5, 2016. Winners receive an elegant, engraved Crystal Star Award; a waiver of registration fees for the conference; and a one-night complimentary room at the conference hotel, and are listed on the world’s most accessed dropout prevention resource, the Web site for the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network.
Crystal Star Award of Excellence Program Winner

The Hope Center for Kids
Omaha, NE
In Honor of Ty and Terri Schenzel

The Hope Center for Kids got started when a youth pastor, Ty Schenzel, from Trinity Church started tutoring and mentoring at a North Omaha housing project "New Jack" in 1994. While building relationships with the youth he had the vision to create a center where many children and youth could be served. In 1998, that vision became a reality as a former Boys Club building was purchased. Today, the Hope Center for Kids offers its 500+ members a place to belong, a sense of security, and a multitude of opportunities to grow into productive adults. Hope Center programs empower youth, ages 5-19, to overcome obstacles in the classroom, on the street, and in the workplace. The focus has evolved from being an afterschool drop-in center to a coordinated program that equips youth for success through faith, education, and employment.

The Center meets immediate needs of young people by serving nutritious meals daily through a Kids Café. Daily life skills instruction teaches skills such as self-esteem, personal responsibility, making healthy decisions, and effective problem solving. Hope Center programs help kids realize their full potential and identify their individual strengths through the Gallup Strength Finders curriculum. Education and employment programs at the Center give youth a protected place to succeed academically. The Hope Center partners with parents and schools to monitor grades and promote progress. Teens are also assisted with ACT/SAT preparation, scholarship research, and college applications. In addition to pursuing higher education, the Hope Center offers intensive employment skills development as well as on-the-job training. This program teaches youth how to attain and maintain a job.

In 2014, the Hope Center served 22,000 meals and reached 1,950 people through family and community events. The Hope Center served 23 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, and 12 high schools. Ninety-five percent of youth hired in the Employability program graduated from high school or received their G.E.D. Records show that 80% percent of youth attending The Hope Learning Academy three or more times per week will be on track for graduation. Over the past ten years, over 90% of Hope youth have graduated from high school.

The vision and work of Ty and Terri Schenzel have made a significant impact on the youth of Omaha, Nebraska. Tragically, Ty and Terri lost their lives in an automobile accident this past August. The impact of their lives will live on. Brenda Christensen, board president stated, “The legacy of Ty and Terri Schenzel belongs to the children and families served by staff and volunteers of The Hope Center.” She said The Hope Center for Kids intends to stay and work in the community “until we are no longer needed.”

Crystal Star Award of Excellence for Distinguished Leadership and Service

Dr. Shanan Chappell
Norfolk, VA

Due to previous commitment, Dr. Chappell is unable to be present. Her award will be presented February 16, 2016, at the 2016 At-Risk Youth National Forum in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Dr. Shanan Chappell currently serves as Research Assistant Professor and Assistant Director for Quantitative Analytics in The Center for Educational Partnerships at Old Dominion University. She holds a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from Old Dominion University, a MEd in elementary education from Regent University, and a BA in communications from Virginia Wesleyan College. Shanan is Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator on nearly $30 million in funded educational research activities, performing advanced quantitative analyses and designing quantitative research methodologies for studies occurring in schools across the nation.

Since May of 2012, Shanan has served as a Research Fellow with the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. During that time, she has participated in the NDPC/N’s Solutions to the Dropout Crisis radio and web broadcasts (June 2012 and December 2014). In May of 2015, Shanan presented the findings of a meta-analysis and meta-regression that analyzed the impact of dropout prevention strategies on dropout and graduation rates. The results were published in a technical report that she co-authored with other NDPC/N Research Fellows and center staff, A Meta-Analysis of Dropout Prevention Outcomes and Strategies (available on the NDPC/N Web site).

Her other research experience and interests include college and career readiness initiatives, education policy studies, early childhood programs, military child and family educational issues, STEM-related projects, and educational technology initiatives.

Dr. Chappell lives in coastal northeast North Carolina with her husband and their two daughters.