

## **NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report**

### **Innovative and Flexible Alternatives**

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## Funding Sources

Fayetteville Education Foundation grants, Arkansas Department of Education Workforce grant, Arkansas Public School Resource Center, Walmart Community Grant, and funds provided by the district for instructional needs

## Project Cost and Budget Narrative

General instructional funds were used for material/resources averaging about \$3,000 annually. The amount will vary depending on number of field trips taken, types of activities provided, and/or any certifications that may be offered.

This project could be implemented with minimum resources depending on the activity. Current staffing, instructional funds, guest speakers, volunteers, mentoring groups, mental health agencies, and various community organizations assist with administering the student development events.

## Scope and Setting

- The Agee Lierly Life Preparation Services Center (ALLPS) offers educational programs and services designed to support the development of students whose needs are not met by traditional programs. The educational process is geared toward the needs of the student. Individualized planning guides the learning to help establish personal responsibility and ensure student success. Students assume responsibility for attending school, actively engaging in learning activities, and cooperating with others in order to maintain a positive learning environment.
- Arkansas Department of Education designated the ALLPS program as a School of Innovation for school years 2015-2019. This allows the school the flexibility to offer opportunities to students during a non-instructional school day. The activities prepare students to transition successfully to life beyond high school in their chosen path. Fridays were chosen as the day to provide students with the necessary support needed to achieve this endeavor. All students are required to participate in a minimum number of student development hours per quarter. After completion of student professional development hours, students are able to earn the remaining Fridays off by maintaining satisfactory grades, behavior, and attendance on a weekly basis. Students not meeting the criteria are identified as the REACH group. A set of expectations has been established for each group of students (Table 1).

**Table 1: Group Expectations**

Group	Expectations
Reach Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students not meeting criteria for satisfactory attendance, behavior, and grades</li><li>• Students attend classes where support is needed as assigned by teacher</li><li>• Automated text/email is sent to notify parents of students assigned</li></ul>
9th graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No waiver from Fridays during the 1st quarter</li><li>• For every quarter, thereafter, 9th graders must attend 20 hours</li></ul>
10th graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend a minimum of 16 hours per quarter</li></ul>

11th graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend a minimum of 12 sessions per quarter</li> </ul>
12th graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend a minimum of 10 sessions per quarter unless student graduates before quarter ends</li> </ul>

**Note:** Some sessions will be required. Sessions may increase in the spring semester for all grades. Students are not excused from classes at other campuses on Fridays.

- a. ALLPS program objectives are:
  1. To help students develop and utilize skills needed to function successfully in life.
  2. To improve student's attendance.
  3. To increase students' academic goals and success for themselves.
  4. To assist students with self-responsibility in all aspects of their lives.
  5. To inspire students to believe in themselves, realize all things are possible, experience success, and achieve a feeling of belonging.
- b. Daily Schedule of Operation  
 ALLPS operates on a 4x4-block schedule. Students attend four 90-minute classes to earn .5 credits per 9 weeks for a total 8 credits throughout the school year. Additional credits may be earned to .5 credits per 9 weeks with access to virtual learning classes.
- c. Students must meet two of eleven criteria for enrollment, to include (Table 2):

**Table 2: Enrollment Criteria**

Single parenting	Frequent relocation of residency
Dropout from school	Homelessness
Personal or family problems	Inadequate emotional support
Recurring absenteeism	Disruptive Behavior
Mental/physical health problems	Pregnancy
Abuse: physical, mental or sexual	Ongoing, persistent lack of attaining proficiency levels in literacy or mathematics.

**Staffing Pattern**

- 13 teachers (2 teachers per core subject area, 1 special education instructor, 2 Credit Recovery Instructors, 2 Business Instructors)
- 2 administrators (Principal/Assistant Principal)
- 1 counselor
- 1 Behavior Support Specialist
- 1 Registrar
- 1 School Secretary

## **Population Served**

- Number of students, subjects, or participants
  - Average 200 students enrolled in the alternative learning program
  - All courses available to earn Arkansas Smart Core Diploma
- Description of project participants (ages, grades, demographics, etc.)
  - Ages 14-21
  - 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> (to include overaged students)
  - 78% Free and Reduced Lunch
  - 62% Caucasian, 28% African American, 6% Hispanic, 4% Other
  - 8% Special Education, 12% ESL
- Participant selection criteria: (see Table 2)

## **Project Origination**

The number one problem for students attending an alternative setting is attendance. Innovative ways to award course credits to students who demonstrated mastery or proficiency of course objectives were necessary. With the district policy regarding attendance, about 75% of the students were losing credits per quarter. Daily average attendance was about 76%-79% Monday–Thursdays, but Friday attendance averaged less than 40% for more than 13 out of 18 weeks. Based on this data, a waiver to the Arkansas Department of Education was requested and approved to waive attendance from six of the thirty hours required of Arkansas public school students on a weekly basis. The school utilized these waived hours to support recovery of excessive absences, behavioral referrals, and failing grades by providing time to provide students' academic/behavior health support and college/career/life skills training.

Students, staff, parents, and community members collaborated to provide ideas for student development hours. Data was collected regarding grades, behaviors, and attendance before the waiver was implemented. Based on the data results, a holistic approach was designed to evaluate student achievement, discipline, and attendance on a weekly basis.

## **Issues Addressed**

- Attendance Issues
- Failure Rates
- Behavioral Referrals
- Graduation Rates
- Social & Emotional Support

## **Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives**

- Reduce failure rates by 30% per quarter
- Reduce suspension rates by 50% per quarter
- Reduce loss of credits (NC-no credit) awarded to students by 50% or more per quarter
- Increase attendance by 5% or more per quarter
- Increase Graduation Rate by a minimum of 8%

### Strategies and/or Interventions

- The student handbook was updated and language such as consequences or infractions was replaced with words like interventions for student actions.
- Removal of In-School Suspension rooms and assigning Friday school vs Saturday school for all minor infractions.
- Incorporating Needs Assessments and Personal Student Information
- Flexible scheduling, shortened day schedule, or school-to-work schedule
- Blended learning curriculum

### Project Timeline

This project is designated for four years, 2015-19.

### Special Conditions and/or Expertise Required to Carry Out the Project

- Data collection and analysis procedures
- Knowledge of alternative learning environments
- Training in dropout prevention strategies and an awareness of the effects of dropouts in society

### Outcomes and Achievements

	<b>2014-15 (before SOI)</b>	<b>2015-16 (1<sup>st</sup> yr. SOI)</b>	<b>2016-17 (2<sup>nd</sup> yr SOI) As of March 17, 2017</b>
Attendance (average daily rate)	76%	88%	88%
Discipline (# of students suspended)	88	44	8
NC's assigned	53%	13%	11%

- NC = no credit (this is assigned due to excessive absences, but student passed the class)
- Suspended students include In and Out of School Suspension

### Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates

Students are able to enroll at ALLPS at any time during the school year. Many seniors enroll or transfer from the traditional school as late as the last two weeks before graduation. Thus, at any time the percentage of students on track to graduate fluctuates. Table 3 reflects the number of seniors graduated/total number of seniors = percentage of graduates. Of the number of graduates, many more were able to take advantage of the extra time and graduate by spring break given the extra time available on Fridays to get help or to work independently.

**Table 3: Percent of Graduates**

	<b>2014-15 (before SOI)</b>	<b>2015-16 (1<sup>st</sup> yr. SOI)</b>	<b>2016-17 (2<sup>nd</sup> yr SOI) As of March 17, 2017</b>
Graduation rate	92/124 = 74%	101/122 = 83%	87% on track
Early graduates	23	28	33

**Current Status Project**

The School of Innovation (SOI) waiver is a four-year project. This project allows the school to continuously create proactive approaches to address students' everyday needs. The SOI committee meets biweekly to design activities for students. Review of the program is analyzed quarterly and changes are made as needed.

**Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant**

As the person requesting the program changes, the following was required:

- Completed School of Innovation application from the Arkansas Dept. of Education
- Stakeholder engagement: planned and scheduled informational and data review meetings for all stakeholders, that included staff, students, parents, district, school board, and community
- Shared leadership: staff meetings were held to provide opportunities for teacher collaboration and shared leadership responsibilities
- Election results: developed, collected, and analyzed data from all stakeholders
- Research: researched and provided references for four-day school programs and successful alternative learning and dropout prevention programs
- Provided a professional development scope of the project
- Established a budget to manage the program
- Obtained approved School Board resolution
- Established Board members for the School of Innovation and meet twice annually the first two years and once every year thereafter to give updates and implement changes
- Established a committee of teachers as School of Innovation committee
- Assisted in designing, implementing, and enforcing the guidelines for participation in activities for staff and students
- Conducted annual conferences and host visitors to the school to observe and share information about SOI processes
- Monitored and evaluated program quarterly

**Lessons Learned**

This project has provided a great deal of success for the ALLPS program. The flexibility offered to students on this day is immeasurable for students and staff. We have adjusted the Friday to half day attendance for students to allow for staff development and planning during the other half of the day. This has improved the culture and climate among staff. The work is not easy, and we are committed to this project in hopes that the district may support a continual run of this program once the waiver ends. Continuous development

of community partnerships and transitional activities is important in order for the program to thrive through the transitioning of school constituents within the school and district.

**Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners About the Project**

Today's youth are dealing with issues that the generation of teachers struggle to overlook, understand, tolerate, and accept. This program has been successful in improving the graduation rate and keeping students in school. It helps students and provides time for staff to plan and participate in professional development with no leave time from the classroom.