

NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report

Beating the Odds

Susan Kennedy
Goal Clarity Coach
Jefferson County High School
900 S. Floyd Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40203

jchscurriculum.com

Key words: alternative education, virtual learning, high school curriculum, individualized learning, online learning, credit recovery, learning management platform, at-risk students

Funding Sources

District funding through Jefferson County Public Schools

Project Cost and Budget Narrative

Jefferson County High School and JCPS/eSchool are managed through a \$6 million annual budget. Under the budget staffing includes:

- 1 principal
- 6 assistant principals
- 6 counselors
- 2 goal clarity coaches
- 65 certified teachers
- 47 staff members

Scope and Setting

Jefferson County High School (JCHS) serves an urban population in Kentucky's largest city. The school is comprised of students 16 years and older who are at-risk of dropping out, have dropped out, or cannot successfully operate in the traditional seven-hour school day. The population is ever changing with an open enrollment and open exit format centered on a pre- and post-assessment. The school functions as a whole, yet is divided into four sites within the city (Ahrens, Fairdale, Iroquois, Jaeger.), as well as JCPS/eSchool, solely an online high school program. Each site consists of an assistant principal, counselor, and core subject teachers, along with classroom assistants and a computer lab instructor.

JCHS sites are placed in various locations throughout the city in order to be accessible to as many people as possible. Additionally, students are provided with two public transportation tickets each day – one to leave for the day and the other to return the next day. The sites operate on three sessions a day: morning, afternoon, and evening. Most JCHS students are employed; a primary reason for truancy issues in a student's past. The flexible, shorter schedule helps students meet the goal of earning a high school diploma while continuing to earn a living. Once a student has enrolled, s/he attends a minimum of three hours a day, five days a week. Students are encouraged to overlap sessions in order to complete credits in a timely manner, but students also have the option to continue work outside of the classroom using eSchool.

Each student has a graduation plan created by the site counselor detailing all credits needed to meet graduation requirements. Students work independently to complete courses within the timeline designated by the classroom teacher or online instructor. Student progress is monitored by multiple adults at the site, as well as online teachers. Additionally, students can earn elective credits by working with the CO-OP instructor to find and maintain employment. Students complete all district and state required testing for each grade level each year they are with JCHS/JCPS eSchool.

Similar to the sites, a student enrolled in eSchool will meet with a counselor to create a graduation plan, but do not attend a brick-and-mortar location. Students who are in eSchool work from any location that is Wi-Fi accessible and may access courses 24-hours a day. The majority of student-teacher communication is conducted through direct messaging in

Blackboard, the online learning management platform. Additionally, students can attend face-to-face tutoring sessions, and are required to take all finals in a monitored testing room.

Furthermore, Jefferson County High School maintains the educational portion of Louisville Metro Youth Detention Center, acts as the homeschool liaison/counselor for students under the age of 16, conducts a program for students over the age of 21 through the Graduate Assistance Center (GAC), maintains an independent study program and staffs Academic Prep Centers (APC) within six of the district's high schools.

Staffing Pattern

Jefferson County High School:

- 1 Principal
- 6 Assistant Principals
- 6 Counselors
- 2 Goal Clarity Coaches
- 67 Certified Teachers
- 47 staff members

Population Served

Jefferson County High School serves students 16 years and older who are working to earn a high school diploma. In the first year, JCHS began with 100 students. Currently, 900 students are enrolled between the brick-and-mortar and the virtual school. Enrollment fluctuates daily with an open enrollment and exit format.

Over 10,000 students have earned a diploma since the inception of JCHS. The 2016-2017 school year has seen its largest graduating class to date with over 350 graduates.

Enrollment for JCHS/eSchool by Ethnicity

Race	Number of students
Hispanic	25
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1
Asian	6
Black or African American	226
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1
White	572
Two or more	55
(empty response)	14
TOTAL	900

Enrollment for JCHS and JCPS/eSchool by grade level

Grade Level	Number of students
9th	60
10th	176
11th	195
12th	380
(Graduate plan incomplete)	89

Project Origination

The need for an alternative to the traditional school setting originated from observations and conversations happening in the early 1980s. Buell Snyder in conjunction with Beverly Herrlinger were looking for a solution to retain large numbers of students who were dropping out of high school in Jefferson County. Many of these students were seeking GEDs, yet only lacked a few credits to complete course work for a high school diploma. At the time, The GED program was handling approximately 9,000 students a year.

A model for an alternative program in Kentucky's largest school district was developed. The alternative program for Jefferson County High School was accepted in December 1984 and began in January of 1985. The selection of staff was based on a personal fit. Teachers underwent 16 hours of training before being considered for a position. The philosophy focused on the relationship between teacher and students as the key to the program's and each student's success. The program focused on three types of students: 16 to 21 years of age who at risk of dropping out, 16 and 21 who had dropped out, and those over 21 years of age or older. JCHS was the first school in the state to eliminate a required amount of "seat-time" for students. The program required students to choose one of three session times each lasting three hours: morning, afternoon, or evening. The school year began with approximately 150 students at four sites within the city limits. By the start of the next school year, JCHS had 700 students and eight locations. The first year the dropout rate dropped 30% and the next year it dropped 50%. From 1988-1992 JCHS had the largest number of graduates in Kentucky.

Issues Addressed

The issue plaguing Kentucky's school system was the high percentage of dropouts across the state, but specifically in Jefferson County. The primary goal was to reduce the number of dropouts and increase the number of students earning a high school diploma.

- Excessive absenteeism/truancy
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of parental support
- Retention/failure/dropout

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives

Goal 1: Increase the number of students who graduate from Jefferson County High School.

Measurable Objective 1:

- To increase the number of students who graduate from Jefferson County High School by 10% for the 2017-18 school year as measured by the number of graduates compared to the number of enrollments.
- To improve the daily attendance rate of students.

Goal 2: Increase the number of Jefferson County High School students who benchmark on the **KYOTE (Kentucky Online Testing)**.

Measurable Objective 1:

- Achieve College and Career readiness by increasing the number of student who benchmark on the KYOTE by 10% for the 2017-18 school year as measured by comparison to the previous year's CCR scores.

Strategies and/or Interventions

Goal 1, Strategy 1:

Accelerated Credit Opportunities

By offering opportunities for students to accelerate in course completion, students will stay on track toward graduation.

Activity/Intervention - Pre-Tests

Students will have the opportunity to pre-test out of content in which they have demonstrated proficiency.

Activity/Intervention - Proficiency Tests

Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency by taking a course proficiency test based on key focus topics.

Activity/Intervention- Credit Recovery

Students will have the opportunity to participate in credit recovery on key focus topics instead of re-taking an entire course.

Activity/Intervention - End of Course Exams

Students will be exempt from a course final if they score Proficient or Distinguished on the State of Kentucky End of Course Exam.

Goal 1, Strategy 2:

Attendance

Faculty, staff, and student buy-in to improve the daily attendance rate in order ensure opportunities for greater student success.

Activity/Intervention - Name and Claim GAP students

We will make sure that we know who our GAP students are so that we can provide necessary support.

Activity/Intervention - Professional Development

By providing professional learning opportunities for our staff to gain a better working understanding of how to build positive relationships with students.

Activity/Intervention: 30/60/90

eSchool teachers will notify counselor and goal clarity coach when a student is not making adequate progress in order to assist with issues preventing him/her from making progress.

Activity/Intervention: Keeping a student from being withdrawn

The goal of Jefferson County High School is to provide an alternative for students who want to receive their high school diploma. With this in mind, the administration wanted to create an atmosphere that makes it difficult for a student to withdraw. If an assistant principal/counselor feels that a student is not making adequate progress they will NOT withdraw a student, but instead contact the goal clarity coaches who will make contact with the student and exhaust all options possible to keep the student enrolled in Jefferson County High School.

Goal 2, Strategy 1:

Through the use of Program Reviews, we will redevelop instructional resources to adapt to new testing method to reduce novice scores and increase proficient scores.

Activity/Intervention - Inferencing and Vocabulary

We will redevelop reading material to combat students' weaknesses in reading and vocabulary.

Activity/Intervention - Data-Driven Instruction

We will use data gathered to target specific areas in need of greater support for math, reading, and writing.

Activity/Intervention - Small group interventions and direct instruction

We will use small group work sessions for math interventions throughout the year as well as using small group math instruction for struggling students.

Activity/Intervention - Course Scheduling

We will highly encourage all students to enroll in and complete grade level math and English courses prior to the Spring ACT of junior year.

Project Timeline

Ongoing

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

There was and continues to be a high population of students who cannot be successful in the traditional 7 hour, 6 period school day. An alternative program was needed to counterbalance the multiple reasons why teens were leaving high school before completion. It was evident from the beginning a small student population and higher teacher population was needed to aid in the success of students.

After the factors for learning were in place, teachers and staff were chosen to best fit the needs of the population. Each student is provided with an individualized learning plan to meet graduation requirements. Each site has an assistant principal and counselor, and each classroom has a certified teacher and teaching assistant. Jefferson County High School employs two goal clarity coaches who work with each site and eSchool students to track progress, monitor attendance, and provide academic support.

Outcomes and Achievements

<u>Desired Outcome</u>	<u>Actual Outcome</u>
Increase the percent of students who graduate from Jefferson County High School.	From May 2016 to present we have increased our graduates from 257 to 314, with more graduates daily.
Increase the number of Jefferson County High School students who are College and Career Ready.	From May 2016 to present we have increased students who are College and Career Ready by 8% from the previous school year. (Final number is unknown until summer.)
Increase the attendance rate of Jefferson County High School students.	From April 2016 to present, we have remained the same with attendance. (Final number is unknown until summer.)

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

Our entire program is designed to keep students from dropping out of high school and/or to earn their high school diploma.

- Graduation rate increased
- Attendance rate increased
- College and Career Ready scores increased

Current Status Project

Ongoing

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant

I am one of two goal clarity coaches at Jefferson County High School. My primary focus is aiding students reach College and Career Readiness standards as set by the Kentucky Department of Education. I provide small group and individual interventions to build reading and writing skills. The interventions are developed for each group or student based on collected student data and conversations with each student's teachers. All students are pre- and post-assessed to determine growth and readiness. An additional component of the state test is math. I track each student to determine when the best time to provide individualized math instruction will occur. I track, schedule, and report all interventions and testing through the state data management system, Infinite Campus.

As I work with students on testing, I am aware of attendance issues and course completions. I closely monitor the students I am working with to ensure each is on course to graduate.

Lessons Learned

- A growth mindset is needed by staff and for development
- Authentically connecting with each student
- Keep a five year running plan to assess future needs and growth
- There is not a one-size fits all – it's about the individual
- Adapting is fundamental

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project

You have to be persistent on many levels. Persist when the school district is telling you it's never been done. Persist when teachers say that's not how we used to do it. Persist when students want to quit, challenge, or resist. Helping students through the obstacles and creating a path for each to begin a solid future is not easy. When a student decides to give up, you have to continue to be the guiding light.