

NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report

BEATING THE ODDS

Mary Sexton, Goal Clarity Coach
Jefferson County High School
900 South Floyd Street
Louisville, KY 40203
(502)485-3173
mary.sexton@jefferson.kyschools.us

<http://www.jchscurriculum.com/>

Key words: Alternative Education, virtual learning, high school curriculum, open enrollment, open exit, individualized learning plan, student advocate, credit recovery

Funding Sources

Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville)

Project Cost and Budget Narrative

Jefferson County High School runs on a budget of \$6 million annually.

Funding includes 1 principal, 6 assistant principals, 6 counselors, 2 goal clarity coaches, 65 certified teachers, and 47 staff members.

Scope and Setting

Jefferson County High School (JCHS) mainly serves an urban population of students 16 years and older in Louisville, KY. Jefferson County High School consists of four sites (brick and mortar) within the city (Ahrens, Fairdale, Iroquois, and Jaeger.) as well as eSchool, which is strictly virtual learning. Each site and eSchool has an ever-changing population since our program is open-entry and open-exit. Once a student has earned the credits necessary for graduation, they are no longer enrolled at our school. Each site has an assistant principal, counselor, and core teachers (Math, English, Social Studies, and Science) along with a computer lab instructor and classroom assistants. Upon entry into our program, the student will meet with the counselor to create a graduation plan so the student is aware of what credit(s) the student needs in order to graduate. Depending upon the learning needs of the student, the student will be placed in a virtual course or book course where they work independently to complete courses. The teachers and assistants are present to help students since each student in a classroom is working on a different course. Students are required to come to school three hours per day and can pick the site/time they would like to attend.

Similar to the sites, a student enrolled in eSchool will meet with a counselor to create their graduation plan, but they do not go to a site; instead, all work is virtual. If they need assistance with their course, they can contact the teacher of the course via email as well as set-up times to personally meet with their teacher.

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

Staffing Pattern

Jefferson County High School has one Principal, six Assistant Principals, six Counselors, 2 Goal Clarity Coaches, 67 Certified Teachers, and 47 staff members.

Population Served

Jefferson County High School serves students 16 years and older who are working to earn a high school diploma. 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
9 th	60
10 th	176
11 th	195
12 th	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 was 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 sixteen 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 are at-risk of dropping out, 16 and 21 years old who had dropped out, and those over 21 years of age or older who had not completed high school. 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 at JCHS dropped

by 30% and the next year it dropped by 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 graduates 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 ONE: 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 TWO: Increase the number of Jefferson County High School students who benchmark on the KYOTE (Kentucky testing standards) tests.

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 ONE

Strategy 1:

Accelerated Credit Opportunities

By offering opportunities for students to accelerate in completing credits, students will stay on track to graduate.

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.

Strategy 2:

Attendance

We will collaborate to improve the daily attendance rate as we feel that this would help our students to Graduate at a faster pace.

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

We will provide 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 want 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 TWO

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 that 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.

Goal Clarity Coaches work as a bridge between administration and staff to identify weaknesses and areas in need of expansion and we are there to aid in building school-community morale. As coaches, we work to bridge a connection between students and teachers, students and community, and students and post-secondary learning opportunities.

A common thread that runs through most JCHS students is an overall lack of connection to previous academic placement and involvement. As educators, we are aware that a variety of connections help to foster relationships and drive student involvement. A connected and involved student is a child who will remain in school and work to earn a diploma. As Goal Clarity Coaches, we work to right the ship's course; we work to build solid relationships between the student, the program, and all stakeholders.

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 the goal clarity coaches for Jefferson County High School. In my position, I work with the teachers in order to reduce students from being absent from school – teachers will refer a student and I will connect with the student and try to determine what can be done from our end to help the student succeed. I am also on the professional development (PD) committee and plan PD for our teachers on issues revolving around preventing students from dropping out. I also plan an annual College and Career Fair for all students in order to expose them to all of doors of opportunity waiting for them once they earn their high school diploma. Along these same lines, I also work with the seniors by credit hour, to help them with the FAFSA and college applications.

Lessons Learned

- Attitude

When a student comes to school, I must always remember that I have no idea what this student has encountered since they left the building the day before, therefore, I must always keep a positive attitude.

- Relationships Matter

In my role, I must remember that school is not always the first priority to the student because of outside factors which are out of their control. The relationship I build with a student might indeed be the only positive force in the life of a student.

- Never Give Up

By the time we get our students, the majority of them have been told over and over that they aren't going to make it.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project

Students, regardless of their backgrounds/age/color, all want someone to believe in them! This belief can lead to success.