

NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report

PREPARE Student Advisement Program

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Key words: Advisement, mentoring, academic monitoring, diploma planning, post-secondary planning, career planning, interventions for at-risk students

PREPARE Student Advisement Program

Funding Sources:

Rockdale County Public School (RCPS) general budget

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

\$3,500 per advisor x 20 advisors per school (9th and 10th grade) x three traditional high schools = \$210,000 per academic year

Project Description:

An advising program (PREPARE) aimed at 9th and 10th grade students established advising sessions with participants at least twice per academic year.

Some of the issues covered during the advisement sessions include:

- anger management
- attendance
- careers
- classes
- clubs, sports, band, drama, ROTC, etc.
- college
- decision making
- discipline
- goal setting
- grades
- graduation
- family
- friends
- my Future
- life
- study skills/habits
- teachers
- time management/organization

Staffing Pattern:

Three traditional high schools, 9th and 10th grade, 10 advisors each grade = 60 advisors. Each advisor has approximately 50 students per caseload.

Population Served:

During the fall 2015 semester, 1,371 sophomores and 1,500 freshmen participated in the PREPARE advisement program. All RCPS students in 9th and 10th grades participated. Table 1 below shows the student demographics for the school year in which data were collected to demonstrate program effectiveness:

		2015-16
Other Subgroups	Limited English Proficient	8.0%
	Eligible for Free/ Reduced Meals	62.0%
	Students With Disability	11.2%
	Migrant	0.0%
Race/ Ethnicity	Asian	4.0%
	Black	37.0%
	Hispanic	15.0%
	Native American/ Alaskan Native	0.0%
	White	41.0%
	Multiracial	3.0%

Table 1. Demographics for combined freshmen and sophomore classes in RCPS (2015–16).

Project Origination:

RCPS saw a need to develop an added layer of support for students that was rooted in developing relationships. Based on the Georgia Student Health Survey conducted each year, approximately 20% of students reported that they did not know a trusted adult in the building. We knew that it was very difficult for school counselors to have a significant relationship with most students when the caseload was approximately 550:1 in some schools. By adding advisors to connect with and monitor 9th and 10th grade students (two critical years for transition and dropout prevention), students were able to have one more adult in the building focusing on their progress.

Issues Addressed:

The PREPARE advisement program addressed the following core issues: developing relationships with students for an added level of social/emotional support, providing academic guidance, and utilizing advisors as a referral source when students needed greater assistance than the advisor could provide.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

The desired outcome was that students would report via survey twice a year that they benefited from the advisement process. Advisors were required to meet with advisees at least four times per year. The four-times-per-year requirement was the only solution that allowed advisors to rotate through the caseload of 50 students. Advisors were also required to call parents twice a year (both during the fall and spring semesters).

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

Strategies and/or Interventions:

Connecting all 9th and 10th grade students with a caring advisor was at the heart of the advisement program, though mentors also provided direct academic support for struggling students.

Project Timeline:

The project began in August 2015 and ended in April of 2016 (prior to state testing).

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

The only requirements were that the advisor be a certified educator and a caring adult who could establish a supportive relationship with students. The program was designed so that advisors would utilize one planning period to meet with advisees.

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

Student responses on the mid-year survey that was administered at the end of the fall 2015 semester were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the program as a whole and the effectiveness of the candidate in particular. Of approximately 2,100 students in grades 9–10 in the district who participated in the advisement program, over 1,400 students responded to the mid-year survey ($N = 1,485$). As shown in Figure 1 below, roughly 7 out of every 10 students (70.35%) who participated in the advisement program responded to the mid-year survey, or more specifically, approximately 65% of participating freshmen ($n = 811$) and 77% of participating sophomores ($n = 674$) responded to the survey.

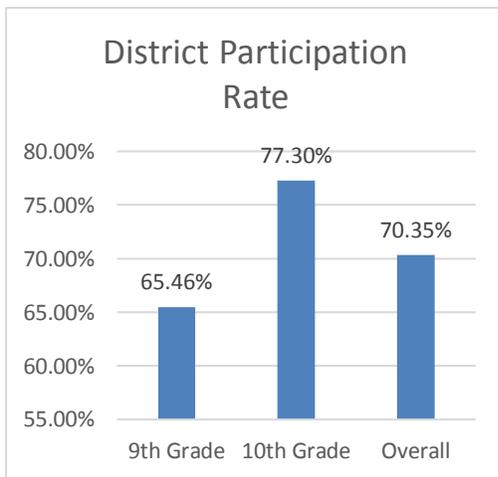


Figure 1. District-wide participation rate on the mid-year survey (fall 2015).

As shown in Figure 2 below, approximately 96% of survey respondents said that meeting with their advisor was either *great* ($n = 882$; 59%) or *okay* ($n = 542$; 27%).

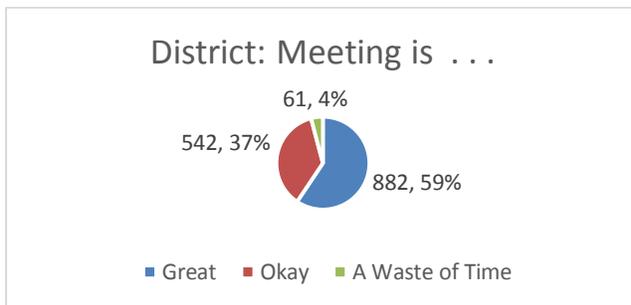


Figure 2. District-wide student responses to “Meeting with my advisor is . . .”

As shown in Figure 3 below, approximately 97% of students said that the conversations they had with their advisors were either *helpful* ($n = 1026$; 69%) or *okay* ($n = 412$; 28%).

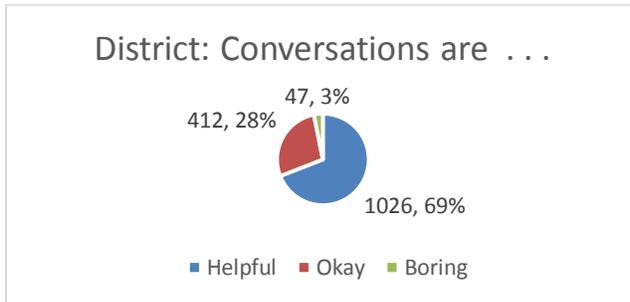


Figure 3. Districtwide student responses to “Conversations with my advisor are. . .”

The data above are for all students in the school district, demonstrating that a large number of students found the advisement program both helpful and informative. When the data were disaggregated by advisor and for the candidate in particular, the results were even more telling.

As shown in Figure 4 below, seventeen students whom the candidate advised responded to the mid-year survey.

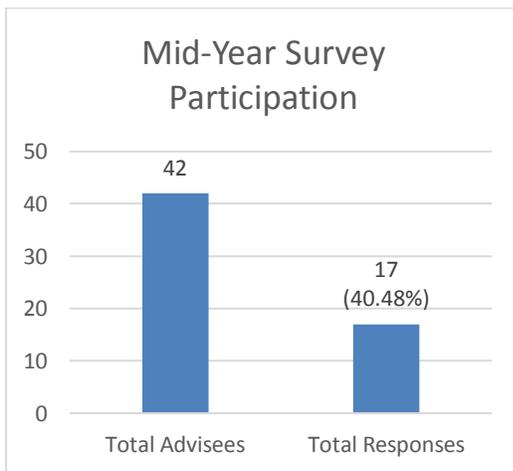


Figure 4. Candidate participation rate on the mid-year survey (fall 2015).

As shown in Figure 5 below, these respondents overwhelmingly found the advisement session helpful and meaningful. Compared to 96% of surveyed students across the district, all respondents the candidate advised (100%) indicated that their meetings with her were either *great* ($n = 15$; 88.24%) or *okay* ($n = 2$; 11.76%). Compared to the district (see Figure 2 above), approximately 29% more respondents the candidate advised said their sessions with her were *great*.

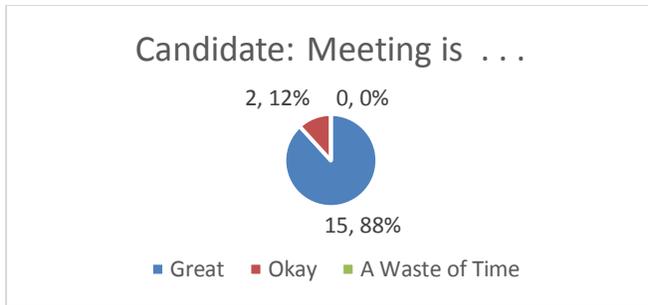


Figure 5. Candidate student responses to “Meeting with my advisor is . . .”

Furthermore, as shown in Figure 6 below, all of the candidate’s advisees (100%) said that their conversations with her were either *helpful* ($n = 14$; 82.35%) or *okay* ($n = 3$; 17.54%). Compared with the district (see Figure 3 above), approximately 13% more students indicated that their conversations with the candidate were helpful.

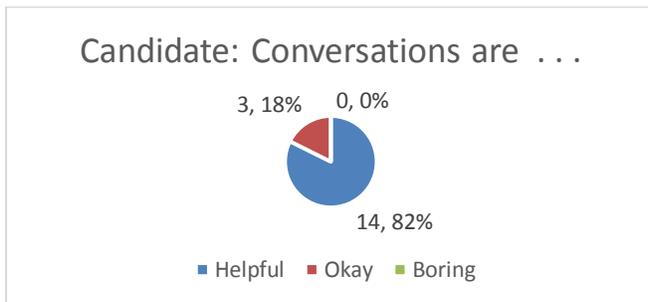


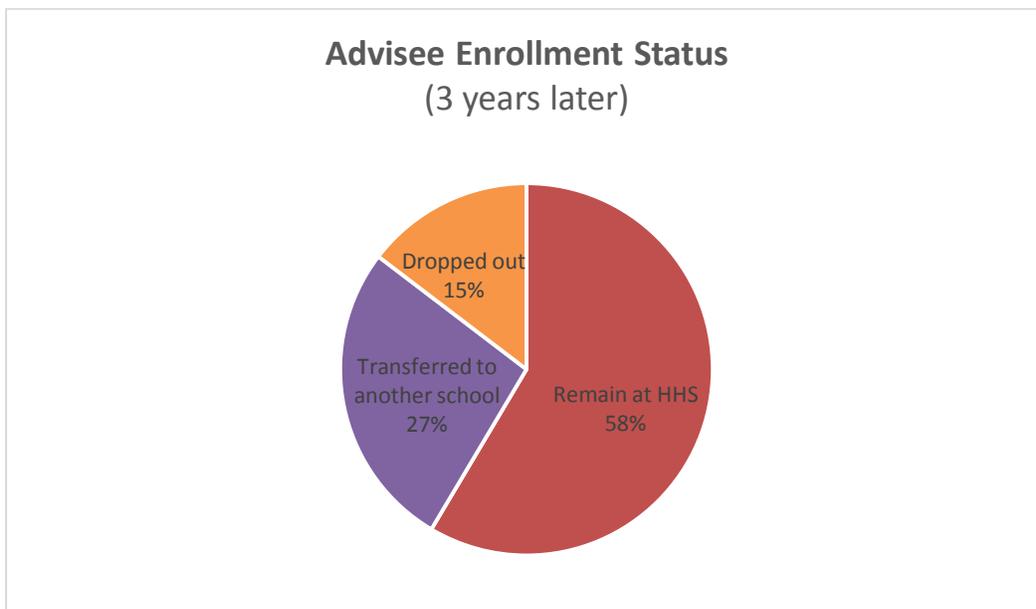
Figure 6. Candidate student responses to “Conversations with my advisor are . . .”

When asked why they were meeting with the candidate, students offered the following explanations:

- “To talk to someone who I truly trust”
- “I am meeting with her because I like to talk to her about everything in my life. I really like meeting with her . . . I feel like I can tell her anything that’s going on in my life.”
- “[She] help reach goals you’ve been wanting to reach but you could never do it so they help you.”
- “To help me progress in my school year and to keep my grades from having a negative impact due to my absents.”
- “School and my attitude towards others and my grades because I really want to be as lawyer when I get older and have a successful life with my own family and make my own money.”

1. What and how are/were the outcomes related to school completion, dropout prevention, and/or graduation rates?

Survey Question	Number of Respondents	Responded Yes	Responded No
1. Was having an advisor in your ninth and tenth year helpful?	11/24 (46%)	11 (100%)	0 (0%)
2. Do you feel you have still talk to your advisor?	11/24 (46%)	11 (100%)	0 (0%)
3. Did your advisor help you stay on track to graduate on time?	11/24 (46%)	11 (100%)	0 (0%)



Current Status of Project:

Ongoing.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

My role in the project was an advisor. Advisors are educators who help students develop a sense of belonging, monitor their academic progress, assist them with planning their sequence of courses, advise them on career and post-secondary choices, and promote a safe-haven for the students—all of which promotes healthy relationships between teachers and students. Many students go through high school without a single teacher really knowing them. I had 42 students on my caseload. I was required to meet with them four times in the school year—two sessions in the fall and two sessions in the spring. However, as I built relationships with each of my advisees, I met with them more than the required sessions. I utilized a fall and spring 9th and 10th

grade checklist of academic and career information. The checklists consisted of long term, short term, and benchmark goal setting, test prep, attendance, career interests, decision making, Move On When Ready (MOWR) programs, and extracurricular activities.

Lessons Learned:

- The administrators and teachers will look to you as a resource/support to help your advisee to be successful in the class.
- Advisors do make a difference in the lives of their advisees.
- Parents appreciate that there is a teacher in the building who has direct access to their child.
- Advisors provide one-to-one relationships that make the transition from middle school to high school easier.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project: Consistency, Commitment & Capacity Building

Consistency: Be consistent with meeting with your advisees. They look forward to meeting with their advisor, and consistency is the beginning of trust.

Commitment: Set quality time with your advisee to create a meaningful experience when they are in your presence.

- Take notes; learn about their likes and dislikes.
- Be intentional about your sessions with them.
- Provide academic and career information so that your advisees can explore different ways of maximizing their high school experience.
- Be a good listener because you don't want to miss the heart of the student by doing most of the talking.
- Have a plan, but let the discussion drive the direction.

Building Capacity: Let your advisee leave your presence full. A simple format for building capacity with your advisee is:

- Access: Share academic and career information.
- Communicate: Leave time for the student to talk and ask questions.
- Teach: Promote self-advocacy by either teaching or showing your advisees how to do the following or why the following is important:
 - transcripts and graduation requirements,
 - the benefits of having a 3.0 or higher GPA,
 - dual enrollment,
 - 2/4 year college or technical schools,
 - decision-making, etc.

You want your students to A.C.T. so they can become active participants in their own academic success.