**A Systemic Approach: Structuring School Improvement to Meet
the Needs of Diverse Group of Learners**

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Success

Funding Sources:
The funding source is the district's general fund, consisting of state and local revenue.

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:
In the first two years of implementation, the only costs were those associated with the salaries of personnel who were identified to work on the project. However, it is important to note that new positions were not added because of the project. In the third year of implementation, the district purchased a software tool to facilitate more efficient data analysis. The cost of that tool is approximately $9,000.

Project Description:
During the planning phases of the project, the sole high school in the district was selected as the focus. However, as time progressed and it became increasingly clear that the scope of the project was vast and that high levels of collaboration would be required, it was determined that the inclusion of elementary and middle schools in this effort was non-negotiable. The issues that the students faced did not begin when they entered high school, but rather, much earlier. As planning progressed, the team realized that in order to truly impact graduation rates for years to come, support across grade levels was needed. Therefore, the setting expanded to include all schools in the district.

Staffing Pattern:
Staff members were already in place in the district, although job roles were adjusted as needed. At the beginning of the project, the team consisted primarily of a small group of district administrators and principals. Over time, the team expanded to include all district administrators, and school teams were formed that included administrators, counselors, academic and graduation coaches, and teacher leaders.

Population Served:
The Gainesville City School System is a diverse, medium-sized district of just over 8,000 students, serving preK-12th grade. Student demographics are 3% Asian, 18% African American, 15% Caucasian, 60% Hispanic, and 4% Other. Twenty-eight percent of the students are classified as English Learners, eight percent are classified as gifted, and nine percent are enrolled in Special Education. There are over 40 nationalities represented in the district. The free and reduced lunch rate is 76%, although all students eat breakfast and lunch at no cost due to the district's Provision 2 status. No student participation criteria were created, since any student in the district could potentially be identified as at-risk through data analysis.

Project Origination:
The project originated as a strategy to be implemented in our district-wide 5-year strategic plan. As a first step, a small group was assigned to address attendance, behavior and classroom success (ABC's) while formulating a plan to support schools in data analysis and development of action plans. As the team began to work with schools, it became increasingly clear that a larger and more inclusive district-level team from all disciplines was needed to help support the work. Additionally, the team realized that different schools had different needs; some schools had formal processes in place to address some of the areas while others did not. Therefore, the project continued to evolve to differentiate for the varying levels of expertise across the district.

Issues Addressed:
The issues and/or needs addressed by this project, as articulated in the district strategic improvement plan, were to improve attendance, behavior, and classroom success to put students on a path toward graduation. Through modeling and support, school and district leaders' skills in the areas of data analysis, effective team building and guiding interventions were addressed.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:
Desired outcomes:
- Build an effective ABC team
- Reduce dropout rate
- Increase graduation rate
- Reduce course failures
- Reduce chronic absenteeism
- Reduce class time lost to behavior incidents

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):
The district has seen improvements in areas of attendance, behavior, and classroom success, all contributing to the increased graduation rate.

Attendance - Improved data collection has resulted in improved intervention (ADA) reducing chronic absenteeism

Behavior - 90.37% of students in Gainesville City have 0 - 1 Office Discipline Referrals making up Tier 1 numbers for Behavior.

Classroom Success - percentage of students reading on/above grade level on RI doubled in two years; percentage of students (K-2) at/above benchmark on DIBELS is progressing at a steady rate of 2 percentage points each year;
percentage of 3rd graders reading on grade level increased 10 percentage points on the state assessment the first year of implementation; percentages of pathway completers, students earning industry credentials, and students earning college credit has increased each year.

Strategies and/or Interventions:
- Developed school level and district level teams to monitor attendance, behavior, and classroom success
- Implementation of an early monitoring system for at-risk students
- State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)
- PBIS
- Data pulls and analysis by subgroup

District Responsibilities:
- SSIP monitoring by school-level teams
- Data pulls initially performed by district, now responsibility of schools
- Modeling effective leadership
- Monitoring of School Improvement Plans

Shared Responsibilities:

- ABC Meetings
- Development of interventions

School Responsibilities:
- PBIS
- Data pulls and analysis
- Creating and Implementing School Improvement Plans

Project Timeline:
The project began during the 2015-2016 school year and is ongoing. The initiative is part of the district strategic plan through 2019.

Special Conditions and/or Expertise Required to Carry Out the Project:
- District staff well-versed in data
- A multi-disciplinary approach

Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:
The district had a significant increase in graduation rate after the first two years of implementation. The overall 4-year cohort graduation rate increased from 74.4% in 2016 to 87.8% in 2017. Increases in selected subgroup performance are as follows:

Subgroup	2016 4-year rate	2017 4-year rate
African American	77%	90%
Hispanic	68%	82%
English Learners	52%	72%
Students with Disabilities	54%	75%

Current Status of Project:
Ongoing.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:
I was one of the original team members assigned to monthly team visits with principals to discuss attendance, behavior, and classroom success at-risk indicators and data. It became clear early on that more consistent, comprehensive processes were needed to support students. Each year, I was a part of helping to expand the ABCs so that they became a part of systemic work.

Lessons Learned:
- Take it slow in establishing your process while being cognizant of school needs.
- The same process may not work at every school.
- Every school is different.
- Build a collaborative spirit and allow schools to take ownership when ready.
- We are in different phases of this process depending on the school's capacity.
- Share responsibility for solution-finding

- Make sure everybody is at the table.
- You do not have to come in with all the answers.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:
Be practical. Don't try to reinvent the wheel. So much of our success was the result of hard work, dedication, and caring about students. Think about your Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports and use your staff and resources to make it happen for students and families.