

Sunshine Club in Alternative School

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***Key words:* dropout prevention, school climate, student volunteer**

Funding Sources: Community Donations

Project Cost and Budget Narrative: We had zero startup costs. Blank cards and envelopes were donated. Part of the project involves community outreach and donations. Then, a redistribution of donations is required.

Project Description: The goal of Sunshine Club is to have a club on campus that is able to instill a sense of giving and gratitude in at-risk students in an alternative school. It also is to build community and to create a positive reputation amongst the community for the Continuation High School.

Staffing Pattern: Lunchtime volunteer position

Population Served: At-risk, alternative high school students

Project Origination: Created by me, Jamie Alarcon, in association of school administration

Issues Addressed: Low motivation, school connectedness, credit earning opportunities

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

- Increase in a sense of school connectedness
- Increase in student motivation
- Increased opportunities for accelerated credits

Results (Outcomes and Achievements): Of the 20 percent of students that joined the club, all students that were a part of the program either graduated or are currently on track to graduate.

Project Timeline: Over the course of one school year.

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

Of the 140 students that are served at Daily High School, a second-chance alternative school/dropout prevention program, thirty students joined and benefited from the club. The outcomes included community outreach and worked to change the negative stigma of the school in the community. In addition, students were provided an opportunity to earn five credits toward graduation via community service. Students in the club made new friends, built community, experienced higher motivation to get their school work done and to participate in school events. Students also experienced high levels of happiness when giving back to the community by volunteering at animal shelters, elementary schools, our local hospital, our local library, and within our school community. Students in the club received additional guidance and a mentor from the club advisor. Students were seen as leaders on campus and were able to earn additional credits toward graduation. Teachers also acknowledged that students who participated in Sunshine Club had a recognizable increase in motivation to get their school assignments completed. Students were reported as having a more positive attitude about school, and students were more likely to participate in school events.

Current Status of Project: Currently, Sunshine Club is continuing next school year. The club has more ideas on how to increase giving back to the community as well as getting more students to join the club. In addition, we are looking for more ways to motivate students when they come to our school as they are placed at Daily due to credit deficiencies. The club works as a positive motivation and also as an intervention for students as they can earn elective credits toward graduation. While participating in the club they are able to receive extra guidance and positive peer pressure to succeed and graduate.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

As a teacher leader at my alternative school site, which is a dropout prevention program, we were looking for positive interventions to increase motivation and provide alternative ways for students to earn credits toward graduation. After much research and looking at what other alternative schools were doing we opted to create the Sunshine Club as an option for students to participate in the school, our local community, and beyond as a way to motivate and increase efficacy by giving back to the community.

Lessons Learned: This club allowed for student participation and voice in the opportunities to provide a more positive school climate for the school. It also allowed students to take the lead in what they saw needed to be done to improve in their community. It also provided experiences for students interested in pursuing a job as well as career exposure for the students that volunteered with multiple agencies.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project: When creating this program, we had much autonomy with how it was created. We did create a syllabus with high expectations for students and their behavior in the community. We actively taught executive functioning skills and soft skills to both go out in the community and share our purpose as well as volunteer in the community. We encouraged participation with field trips and planning of fun student driving events. It was important to have a vision and share that vision with others.