Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) Conference
Shelby County Schools District
Memphis, TN

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Funding Source:
SAFE Schools Grant has been our major funding source. There is no cost for students.

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:
The grant amount is $90,000. This represents the total budget to operate the project from July through April as described in the scope in the project.

Project Description:
While it is difficult to create a balance between a safe school and a welcoming, caring environment, it is important to create a school climate that does not tolerate bullying, intimidation, and terrorism. Students who are afraid often avoid school. A safe learning environment is focused on academic achievement, fostering positive relationships, and encouraging community involvement.

SAVE (Students Against Violence Everywhere) conference is a place for young people across the district to show their leadership, creativity and passion for protecting their friends, schools and communities from violence BEFORE it happens.

The SAVE Conference is led by students and is a powerful approach to preventing gun violence (and other forms of violence and victimization) because they recognize the unique role that young people play in making their schools and communities safer.

The scope of the SAVE Conference is to engage students in meaningful violence prevention efforts within their schools, communities, and beyond. Participation in this event equips students with alternative ways of dealing with potential intimidating and/or violent situations. Students learn to identify, assess, and intervene when they observe a peer exhibiting at-risk behaviors either in person or via social media. Students also begin to build capacity for youth empathy, social responsibility and social activism. Students learn to engage in a more inclusive environment that could ultimately lead to a decrease in the likelihood of a student dropping out of school. (https://psychcentral.com/news/2017/12/03/victims-of-childhood-violence-more-likely-to-drop-out-of-high-school/129470.html)

S**taffing Pattern:**
The staffing pattern involves the department's director and three managers, with one manager as the project lead. Other department staff (advisors, specialists and an administrative assistant) provide support with the planning and logistics.

Population Served:
The annual conference serves all 31 high schools across the Shelby County School District. Shelby County Schools serves more than 113,000 students, and has a demographic structure as follows: 73% African American, 15% Hispanic/Latinx, 7% White, 1% Asian, and 4% other. High school students participating in the conference range from grades 9-12. The selection criteria are based on recommendations from students, high school counselors and administrators.

Project Origination:
In 2012, a student from Shelby County Schools attended the National Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) Conference in Charlotte, NC. Upon returning, he formed a SAVE Club with members of the SCS Student Congress.

At their initial local conference, approximately 75 students attended to address violence prevention, bullying and intimidation. Since its inception, the conference has grown to 600+ participants from the district's high schools.

Issues Addressed:
Within the city of Memphis in 2018, there were 2,496 incidents of gun violence (per 100,000 population), and a 30% recidivism rate. In contrast, there were 3,371 incidents of gun violence and a 22% recidivism rate in 2019. Major violent juvenile charges increased to 32.4% in 2019 as compared to 2018 (crime commission@memphiscrime.org). The SAVE Conference shines a light on a city in dire need of metamorphosis and reform. The needs addressed by this project are awareness, activism, communication and appropriate responses to preventative, harmful, intimidating and or violent situations.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:
The desired outcomes and measurable objectives of the project are:
- to assure safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments.
- to build awareness of self and peer at-risk behaviors and strategies for resolution.
- to promote engaged meaningful student involvement.
- to equip students with problem-solving skills to avoid or prevent a harmful or violent situation that could possibly lead to a student dropping out of school.

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:
The strategies employed by the conference are:
- to provide students the time and space to learn.
- to practice and fail then succeed in making peace.
- to empower students with long term prevention programming that supports their emotional and social development.

SAVE program participants are engaged in learning through the arts, experiential opportunities, community service, leadership development, mentoring, physical activity, writing, tactile lessons and being part of a positive peer group.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):
The expected outcomes of this project are:
- students will learn how to identify, assess, and intervene when they observe a peer exhibiting at-risk behaviors either in person or via social media.
- students will begin to build capacity for youth empathy, social responsibility and social activism.
- students will learn to engage in a more inclusive environment that could ultimately lead to a decrease in the likelihood of a student dropping out of school.

Project Timeline:
This is an annual event with the planning for each year beginning shortly after the end of the current year. The reason for such an expansive period is to allow ample time to secure an appropriate location, desired speakers for the general sessions, subject matter experts to lead the workshops, various artists, vendors, conference supplies and to map the logistics.

Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:
Violence has become part of the fabric of our society. Schools are no longer safe havens for children. Because they fear physical harm, hundreds of thousands of students per day miss school. Students cannot learn in an unsafe environment. A welcoming environment is particularly important for students who are struggling and need extra support. (https://memphiscrime.org/the-stats/)

SAVE research revealed that students who attend the SAVE Conference and participate in other leadership activities demonstrate increased self-esteem and confidence, conflict resolution, presentation/public speaking skills, and knowledge about violence prevention strategies.

SAVE students continue working to improve the safety of physical environments, as well as decreasing harassment and bullying at their schools through Peer Mediation, Start With Hello, and Say Something projects.

Students drop out of schools for many reasons, but violence and conflict are contributing factors that place students at-risk.

Special Conditions, Expertise, and/or Skills Required to Carry Out Project:
The expertise required to carry out this project is training on adverse childhood experiences and a keen awareness of the impact that youth violence has on a child's educational success.

Current Status of Project:
The 2020 SAVE Conference will be March 24, 2020. Over 600 students from SCS will attend the conference.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:
My role in this project is helping the project lead, one of our managers on our team, with surveying the location for the event, mapping the different areas for the general sessions, breakout sessions, and vendors' area setup.

Lessons Learned:
One of the lessons I have learned as we progress through this project is that you must be flexible, open to change and consider the ideas of others.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the project:
The advice I would give other dropout prevention practitioners is similar to my previous answer and that is to be flexible. Also, I would ask the students what they want to accomplish from this or any project that involves them.