

2014 National Dropout Prevention Network
Crystal Star Awards of Excellence



CRYSTAL STAR AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM WINNERS

Mountain Educational Charter High School Cleveland, GA



Accepted by:
Dr. Richard Behrens

Mountain Education Charter High School (MECHS) provides students the opportunities to become successful learners and earn a Georgia High School Diploma. MECHS is an academic, self-paced, individualized, evening high school that serves students who are seeking a nontraditional school environment and have the desire to graduate high school. The locations, scattered throughout the Northeast Georgia region, offer a full range of high school courses in a convenient, flexible, individualized format. Mountain Educational Charter High School allows students who have dropped out of high school to easily enroll and pick up right where they left off.

With the economic downturn, many of the local communities in Northeast Georgia have been hit hard and many students find themselves having to work during the day to help support families. Therefore, each site is open from four o'clock until nine Monday through Thursday with extended opportunities for more individualized instruction, depending on student need.

"Whatever it takes" is a recurring theme at MECHS and is exemplified by the many services for students to help with attendance and academic performance. The tuition is 100% free for students enrolled full-time. Graduates of MECHS earn an official Georgia High School Diploma and must have completed all state requirements for graduation, including all mandated state tests. Students are also encouraged to continue their education beyond high school graduation.

Edmonton Catholic Schools Alberta, Canada



To be presented at the 2015 National Forum for Dropout
Prevention for Native and Tribal Communities
April 28, 2015

After attending a presentation at the 2009 National Forum for Native and Tribal Communities, Edmonton Catholic Schools developed and implemented a graduation coach program in St. Joseph High School. Since its implementation, the three-year graduation rate of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) students at St. Joseph High School increased from 14.9% to 60.4% by supporting the transition of students from junior high and retaining students as they progress through high school. This significant increase has been accomplished through an innovative model, which includes comprehensive individual and group supports for these students.

The role of the Graduation Coach is to provide mentoring and guidance to FNMI students to ensure they are provided with a nurturing and safe environment that supports them as they find a sense of competence and achievement. Graduation Coaches are located at several Edmonton Catholic Schools. Each school has a study center where students can gather to work on projects, utilize computer stations, work with a tutor, attend cultural activities, receive individual counseling supports, or attend career workshops. Graduation Coaches also work with junior high students to ease the transition to high school. This transition can be a stressful phase for students, as they must adapt to changes in environment, education practices, and social structures.

Edmonton Catholic Schools consulted with more than 100 schools about the Graduation Coach Program. Several of these schools have implemented a similar program in their own context.

CRYSTAL STAR AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

INDIVIDUAL WINNERS

Kelly Tonsmeire

Alaska Staff Development Network, Douglas, AK



Kelly Tonsmeire has consistently provided strong statewide leadership in facilitating collaborative interagency dropout prevention efforts. He is the director of the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), a nonprofit education organization providing staff development services to all of Alaska's K-12 teachers, professional and paraprofessional staff, and administrators. Over the past three decades, Mr. Tonsmeire has written and directed U.S. Department of Education and private grants totaling more than 50 million dollars. These added grant dollars have targeted improving student achievement in Alaska's most persistently low-performing schools and districts. In addition, Mr. Tonsmeire directed the Rural Alaska Principal Preparation and Support (RAPPS) program, designed to support and educate the principals of Alaska's most remote districts. This program has demonstrated Kelly Tonsmeire's excellent leader-

ship capacity in facilitating interagency collaboration addressing objectives that school districts, the State, Mr. Tonsmeire, and other partners share in common. Kelly Tonsmeire has also directed the Graduation and Academic Improvement for Native Students (GAINS) project, a four-year program in the Bering Strait School District, aimed at identifying potential dropouts and assisting them to graduation. The GAINS project has increased the graduation rate of the district by nearly 42%. Kelly Tonsmeire and ASDN have consistently and successfully used a continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives to provide an organizational structure that allows each school to develop a learning environment that ensures quality education for all students.

Seith Bedard

Peabody Learning Academy, Peabody, MA

Seith Bedard is the Director of the Peabody Learning Academy, a program for at-risk and high school dropouts. Mr. Bedard has worked tirelessly with parents, teachers, administrators, and community members in order to help his students succeed. He has implemented various techniques in order to aid this success. First, Mr. Bedard is a firm believer that participating in community service activities helps his students find a place in the community and empowers them with a new sense of self-worth. Therefore, he has incorporated a monthly community service commitment to the school day. He and his students participate in many community service organizations including but not limited to Habitat for Humanity, American Red Cross, Hero's Breakfast, and the Greater Boston Food Bank. Seith Bedard has also created the Community Advisory Board, which is made up of teachers, parents, local business owners, and local politicians. Together, they find and create employment and mentorship programs between small businesses and his students. Mr. Bedard has impacted a population of students that has not been able to be reached by others. He has accomplished this by implementing a great deal of technology and individualized instruction for all of his students. Because "alternative" education carries a certain negative stigma, most students and educators tend to believe that the greatest success for these students would be if they graduate high school. This is not the culture Seith Bedard instills in his staff and students at the Academy. Over the past four years alone, Mr. Bedard is responsible for 65 at-risk students graduating from high school, 40 of these are enrolled in college or a post-secondary program. Seith Bedard's hard work in seeking alternative methods and the use of technology has not only strengthened the teaching culture of Peabody High School, but has also paved the way for dynamic changes in all classrooms in our district.



Crystal Star Award of Excellence

Distinguished Leadership and Service



Gov. Steven L. Beshear and First Lady Jane Beshear

Commonwealth of Kentucky

Governor Steven Beshear and First Lady Jane Beshear have a real understanding of the importance of education and are determined to help Kentucky's students achieve at their highest level.

Together, they have dedicated countless hours to dropout recovery, prevention, and intervention services for students. Together they have championed legislation aimed at helping every Kentucky student not only graduate from high school, but also be college- and career-ready. They have worked with legislators from both chambers of the General Assembly to introduce, pass, and implement Senate Bill 97 (SB 97), known as the Kentucky Graduation Bill. Mrs. Beshear, a former teacher, led the call to legislators about the need to support SB 97 to keep students in school. SB 97 is the most far-reaching dropout prevention legislation ever created in Kentucky, raising the dropout age from 16 to 18 for every student in the Commonwealth.

The demonstrated leadership on education issues by Governor Beshear and the First Lady will leave a lasting impact for every student Kentucky serves. The Governor and First Lady have been instrumental in bringing the National Dropout Prevention Network Conference to Kentucky, exposing educators to effective strategies and alternative programs that provide helpful tools in engaging students of any age and grade level. For their leadership and service regarding dropout prevention in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, The National Dropout Prevention Network is pleased to present the Governor and First Lady the Crystal Star Award of Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention and Prevention.

CRYSTAL STAR OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS: REQUESTS FOR NOMINATIONS FOR 2015

A program or individual from your state could be a prestigious Crystal Star of Excellence Awards winner in 2015 but only if you make a nomination. The forms will be available on the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network Web site, www.dropoutprevention.org, in February 2015. The deadline for nominations is July 1, 2015.

The award categories are Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention for Individuals and Programs; Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention for Individual and Programs for Students with Disabilities; and Distinguished Leadership and Service to the National Dropout Prevention Network.

All award winners will be honored at the 27th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference in San Antonio, TX, October 25-28, 2015. Winners receive an elegant, engraved Crystal Star Award; a waiver of registration fees for the conference; and a one-night complimentary room at the Wyndham San Antonio.