

# **NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report**

## **Student Advocate/Administrative Specialist Project**

Davidson County High School  
Lexington, NC

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## Student Advocate/Administrative Specialist Project

### Funding Source

North Carolina State Salary Funds for Alternative Instruction

### Project Cost and Budget Narrative

Funds to pay salaries of two teacher assistants

### Scope and Setting

Davidson County High School (DCHS) is an alternative education provider located in Lexington, NC. The school currently serves at-risk students in Davidson County. Students are selected from a pool of applicants who have been referred by the administration and the student services departments of the six high schools that Davidson County serves. Most of the students who attend DCHS have not been successful in the traditional school setting and need extra support to remain in school. DCHS is currently a blended learning school in which students complete a portion of their coursework independently and the other portion with direct teacher instruction. Most students attend classes every other day for direct teacher instruction. On days when students are not receiving teacher instruction, they have “lab days.” During this time, students work at personal computer stations to complete coursework that the teachers have assigned. Teachers are in the lab and available for one-on-one assistance and instruction on the days they are not teaching. I am stationed in the lab every day where I assist students with reading strategies and general classwork. A few of our students are in the lab every day for credit recovery and need supervision and assistance daily. It should also be noted that DCHS accepts students on a rolling membership basis with a 10-day trial period, so students enroll throughout the year, including midsemester enrollees.

### Staffing Pattern

The project was designed to be implemented by two teacher assistants, both of whom would be stationed in the learning lab where students are completing independent classwork.

### Population Served

- Number of students, subjects, or participants:  
All students are served by the student advocate and student administrative specialist. However, teachers and school counselors regularly recommend priority students depending on daily individual needs.
- Description of project participants (ages, grades, demographics, etc.):  
As of February 2016:

Population	Male	Female	Total
Asian	0	0	0
African American	1	3	4
Latino	1	1	2
White/Caucasian	17	38	55
Native American	0	1	1
Other Populations	2	3	5
Totals	21	46	67

- Participant selection criteria:  
All of our students are eligible for services. However, since our students' daily dilemmas affect schoolwork and attendance, this program helps us better identify students who may be experiencing difficulties at home or at school.

### **Project Origination**

The idea for the project came from a webinar presented by the National Dropout Prevention Center in which presenters described a similar program in neighboring Randolph County, NC. Although Randolph County does not have an alternative high school, there were several ideas presented that I thought might be adapted to our school. I contacted the student advocate coordinator with Randolph County Schools, Kim Wagoner, and arranged to attend a student advocate specialist county meeting to learn more about their program and how it works in individual schools. The following is a schedule of meetings with both Randolph County Student Advocates and the coordinator of the program.

- 9/21/15 – Initial Contact with the student advocate coordinator through email.
- 9/23/15 – Attended a monthly meeting of middle school and high school student advocate specialists in Randolph County.
- 10/9/15 – Arranged a meeting between the Davidson County Assistant Director of Academic Support, Deana Coley, and the Student Advocate Coordinator of Randolph County, Kim Wagoner. Allison Mosley, Student Advocate Specialist at Wheatmore High School, was also there to answer questions about her role in dropout prevention.
- 10/23/15 – The teacher assistant being considered for the student advocate position and I met with Kathy Vestal, Student Advocate Specialist, Eastern Randolph High School, to discuss the needs at her school for an advocate for at-risk students.
- 11/16/15 – Kim Wagoner and Allison Moseley visited our alternative school to give suggestions on how we might implement this program at our school. They also visited our Teen Parent Program.
- 11/20/15 – DCHS Principal, Ronda Fletcher, and Deana Coley, Davidson County Assistant Director of Academic Support, visited the student advocate specialists' monthly meeting in Asheboro, NC.
- 11/30/15 – I arranged a meeting between our school counselor and our teacher assistant to meet with a school counselor and the student advocate specialist at Wheatmore High School in Randolph County to discuss how those departments coordinated services to best serve students.

### **Issues Addressed**

After collaborating with Randolph County, the teacher assistant selected to be the student advocate specialist and I met to discuss the needs of our students. Our students are all considered "at risk" in one or more areas so we needed to target our goals to serve all of our students. Our teacher assistants had not been given specific job duties so the first thing we did was make a list of all duties that affect our students in the lab setting every day. After making a complete list, we then divided duties so that each assistant would have a clear description of job duties so that all students would be best served. The following is a working, tentative list of all job duties. We also divided the list into two specific job descriptions. I shared the following document with the other teacher assistant to get her input on the specific job duties. I also shared the list with our dean of students, our principal, our school counselor, and our data manager so I could get their input on the job duties.

### ***Job Duties for Student Advocate Specialist and Student Administrative Specialist***

The following assignments are included in *both* positions:

- Make sure students are working on assigned work for that class period
- Assist all students with academic work
- Make sure students are not on YouTube, cell phones, etc.
- Consistently check Edgenuity for credit recovery students
- Make sure students are going to classes on time
- Make sure students are completing late/missing work
- Answer phones
- Drive bus for field trips
- Keep records for bus trips
- AM/Phoenix Duties
- Other duties, as assigned
- 

#### **Student Advocate Specialist**

- Keep Travel Tracker records
- Initiate weekly attendance committee meetings
- Coordinate with school counselor/ administrator to develop a plan of action with at-risk graduates (contract, etc.)
- Make parent contacts for attendance
- Assist social worker/school counselor with home visits
- Liaison between home and school
- Collaborate with student services, administration, and teachers about academic progress
- Refer students to outside agencies (food pantries, etc.) or to school counselor (mental health, etc.)
- Coordinate with school counselor to keep a list of current homeless/transient students
- Document dropout prevention paperwork
- Member of graduation committee
- Attend conferences of potential graduates who are falling behind
- Conference with students about alternative schooling (homeschool, etc.)
- Maintain documentation on at-risk students
- Report to teachers any circumstances that may affect academics
- Conduct exit interviews with all withdrawals
- Mentor students with attendance/academic issues
- Maintain confidentiality

#### **Student Administrative Specialist**

- Assign new student cubbies
- Prepare cubbies for new students, go over rules, and have students watch orientation video
- Conduct new student orientation (policies/forms)
- Print Haiku & Edgenuity information
- Make sure new students know how to log in to Haiku and Edgenuity
- Conduct read-aloud testing accommodations
- Assist school counselor with surveys, etc.

- Coordinate with school counselor to create career day/graduation brochures, QR codes, paperwork, filing
- Purge files
- Shred papers
- Schedule Interviews
- Make copies
- Maintain bulletin boards including displays of completion for Edgenuity
- Assist with graduation caps and gowns, etc.
- Collaborate with school counselor to maintain list of students applying to college
- Print test corrections
- Cover classes when needed
- Cover office when needed
- Maintain lab supplies
- Organize and purge magazines
- Maintain confidentiality

### **Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives**

It was my hope that our at-risk students would be better served in our lab setting and therefore, be more successful in classwork and on state assessments. Improved graduation rates and fewer absences are also measurable objectives of the project.

### **Strategies and/or Interventions**

See the strategies and interventions listed in the job description for the Student Advocate Specialist.

### **Project Timeline**

Ongoing. The project is still in the beginning stages and hopefully will be implemented fully in the 2016-17 school year.

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

The student advocate specialist must maintain a teacher/student relationship rather than a “buddy” relationship. Our student advocate specialist attended the Collaborative Conference on Student Achievement on 3/21/16 through 3/23/16 to gain further skills in order to advocate for our at-risk students. It is sponsored by The North Carolina Department of Instruction.

### **Outcomes and Achievements**

The teacher assistants are more aware of all the jobs that are required to make our blended learning environment run smoothly. By defining their roles in the dropout prevention process, it gives validity and value to the work they do with students every day. By listing all the jobs that need to be done in our learning lab, they are also more aware of the division of duties and how to best serve our at-risk population.

### **Outcomes Related to School Completion and Graduation Rates**

This project has made most of our staff aware of how we can better use teacher assistants in our efforts to keep students in school and on the road to graduation. Table 1 provides a comparison of the graduation rate of Davidson County High School as compared to the overall graduation rate of the Davidson County School system over the past 5 years. Our graduation rate decreased slightly last year and we want to do everything we can to improve graduation rates for our students.

Table 1

*Comparison of graduation rate of Davidson County High School (DCHS) and overall graduation rate of Davidson County School System (DCS) over the past 5 years.*

Place	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
DCHS	80.3	82.4	71.4	66.0	30.6
DCS	82.1	85.1	85.2	82.5	80.6

**Current Status of Project**

Teacher assistants are currently also being called “Student Advocate Specialists” and no clear distinction is being made between job duties. Under the direction of the school counselor, they are implementing some of the ideas that I presented in this project. I have spoken to our principal and hope that she will revisit this project next fall to make sure we are doing all we can to prevent students from dropping out of school and also helping our students to become successful in their pursuit of a high school diploma and beyond.

**Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant**

I was the developer and coordinator of this project.

**Lessons Learned**

School personnel often have different views on how best to address the dropout dilemma. As with any new approach, there has been some resistance because of past experiences with the issue. My school is slowly realizing how a student advocacy program can benefit our students and how using this system can lead to a more efficient approach to contacting potential dropouts and providing them the services that they need to stay in school. Through the use of a student advocate, parents and students will be made aware of programs and options that they may not have known were available to them. I have also learned that it may require time for some people to see my current role change to include an emphasis on dropout prevention. I am the literacy specialist at my school so the work that I am doing in establishing the student advocacy program is different from my usual work with students in the area of literacy.

**Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners About the Project**

Be persistent. If you know that a program or procedures are best for students, be aware that it may take time to implement all the elements that make the program successful. Since the student advocacy program shifts some responsibilities from people who are already spread too thin, it can be a great service to a busy school counselor or the administration of a school. However, if those people find it difficult to delegate or share responsibilities, it may take time for the school as a whole to recognize how beneficial this extra support can be. Even though we are dealing with some of these challenges, our school still plans to continue to move forward on this project. I am sure, in time, our students and our whole school will benefit from our implementation of this program.