

NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report

Operation Success: Mountain Education Charter High School Curriculum Review Process

65 Kenimer Street
Cleveland, GA 30528

Dr. Sheri Hardin, Project Director

706-878-0816
shardin@mymec.org

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Funding Sources

Mountain Education Charter High School (MECHS) Curriculum Budget (State Funds)

Project Cost and Budget Narrative

Budget included hourly wages for teachers to attend Lead Teacher Meetings along with hourly wages for teachers to conduct curriculum evaluations in each End Of Course (EOC) subject area. Travel was also included in the project budget. Travel expenditures covered any travel to attend Lead Teacher meetings at Central Office. Because we do not contract with our employees but pay hourly, approximate cost of this project is estimated to be \$30,000 per year.

Scope and Setting

The setting included the classrooms at all MECHS sites. The scope of this project included students enrolled in EOC courses at MECHS. These courses included ninth-grade lit, American lit, physical science, biology, U.S. history, economics, coordinate algebra, and analytic geometry.

Staffing Pattern

- Subject area lead teachers from each site.
- Instructional Technology support from the Technology Department.
- EOC subject area classroom teachers including special education (SPED) and English language learner (ELL) teachers.

Population Served

- Number of students, subjects, or participants
Approximately 1,500
- Description of project participants (ages, grades, demographics, etc.)
 - Project participants were students in grades 9-12 who were enrolled in EOC courses.
 - Project participants were ages 15-21.
 - Approximate percentage of ELL students: 2-3%
 - Approximate percentage of SPED students: 18%. This percentage includes students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and 504 students.
- Participant selection criteria:
Students at MECHS who were enrolled in an EOC course.

Project Origination

Because MECHS is a blended model instruction program where teachers act as facilitators, there was a need for a systematic way of evaluating our curriculum compared to state standards and EOC scores. To ensure a comprehensive review of each EOC subject area, a lead teacher from each subject area evaluated the curriculum by completing a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet included the state standards and whether or not these standards were addressed, partially addressed, or not addressed. In addition to addressing the standards, information pertaining to the “location” of the standard in the curriculum was included. After completing an initial evaluation, lead teachers from each site met to discuss the evaluation and potential revisions. Revisions to the curriculum were based on the consensus of the lead teacher group.

Issues Addressed

The issues addressed with this project were (a) ensuring MECHS curriculum met state standards, (b) ensuring MECHS curriculum met the needs of special populations at MECHS, and (c) addressing MECHS academic performance on state assessments.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives

The desired outcomes and measurable objectives of this project included curriculum alignment to state standards, increased course completion, and increase in the average of students who were successful on EOC tests compared to the state.

Strategies and/or Interventions

Strategies/interventions of the project included development of curriculum accommodations for ESOL and SPED populations, revising the curriculum to address state standards omitting concepts that could not be correlated to state standards, development of benchmark testing embedded in the curriculum, and the development of support resources including review videos and guided notes.

Project Timeline

2015-2016 school year and ongoing

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

Highly qualified teachers were required to complete a thorough review of the curriculum. In addition to highly qualified teachers, technology support was required to effectively implement curriculum revisions and resources in a digital environment

Outcomes and Achievements

Alignment of curriculum to state standards revealed strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. When the identified gaps in the curriculum were addressed, MECHS's overall EOC success increased. The supplemental resources in math enabled students to complete math courses in a timely manner; whereas, previously students were not earning math credits, which impeded graduation. Students also asked smarter questions and were able to use the supplements as an excellent reference guide. The math supplemental resources benefitted not only the best note takers but also our SPED and ESOL populations. In addition to the math resources, the science resources that were developed provided an excellent review of concepts prior to the EOC. Because we are self-paced, students complete the curriculum at different times. The review resources provided assistance to the student, when needed. The student did not have to wait on classmates to complete their curriculum to receive additional support through reviews.

Outcomes Related to School Completion and Graduation Rates

By developing a standardized method of curriculum evaluation and revision, we were able to implement a process that identified barriers within the curriculum that were preventing students from earning course credits and being successful on EOC tests. In addition to identifying barriers to our regular education students, this process enabled the team to identify barriers to our special populations of students such as SPED and ELL. Additional student support services were added in needed areas along with curriculum revisions to ensure course completions. The increase in course completions in turn increased the number of students who graduated.

Current Status of Project

Because of the success of this standardized process, MECHS will continue with the project. Lead teachers will meet every summer to discuss potential curriculum revisions based on this process. Additional support resources will be added.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant

I facilitated the review and implementation process of this project. In addition to facilitating this process, I also presented our methods and findings at the National Dropout Prevention Conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina on February 15, 2016.

Lessons Learned

- There may be barriers within the curriculum that prevent students from completing courses and graduating.
- Support services along with curriculum revisions can help the student be successful.
- All stakeholders need to be involved in the process, including lead teachers, technology, SPED, and ELL.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners About the Project

Student success is more than a state score or course completion. Curriculum reviews need to go beyond ensuring alignment to state standards to the removal of barriers to success. These barriers may include lessons that are not necessary and/or the lack of resources to help the student identify what is important. Instead of saying these students can't, we need to change our thinking and ask why can't they? With this mindset change, we answer the why and then remove that barrier.