

NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report

Red Clay Consolidated School District Prevention Conference/Partnering for Success

Cab Calloway School of the Arts
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Red Clay Consolidated School District Prevention Conference/Partnering for Success

Funding Sources

Red Clay Consolidated School District - District Services

Project Cost and Budget Narrative

Funding allocated for this project was \$5,000.

Keynote Speaker	\$2,000
Supplies	3,750
Breakfast	1,000
Lunch	2,250
Total Estimate	\$9,000

The Office of District Services was allocated \$3,000 as start money to run the full-day conference. We did receive \$3,000 in support from partner agencies and vendors.

Cost to conduct the one-day conference were kept to a minimum (a) holding the conference in one of our schools (Cab Calloway); (b) having a high school culinary arts class provide the noon meal, and (c) requesting our district Nutritional Services provide the morning coffee and Danish. Additional costs were incurred from purchasing supplies to give away as gifts to conference attendees.

We were able to obtain keynote speaker, Mr. Darryl Andrews, at a rate of \$2,000. Costs associated with providing food to our attendees were kept to a minimum through the district's Nutrition Services and through the Culinary Arts Programs of McKean High School. Costs associated with supplies were kept to a minimum through bulk purchasing. One of our local sponsors paid for the printing of the conference programs.

Scope and Setting

The conference was held April 26, 2016, a state in-service day. Cab Calloway School of the Arts was chosen as the location. This school is conveniently located within the city limits, which allowed easy access for urban parents.

Twenty-five workshops were scheduled due to the graciousness of our partners, outside agencies, and school staff that are committed to reducing dropouts in our schools. Each workshop is scheduled for 50 minutes with the exception of a few double scheduled workshops at the request of the individual presenters. Workshop presenters were not provided a stipend but graciously volunteered their time due to their dedication to reducing the dropout rate.

Conference attendees were charged \$30 to attend the conference to support the costs of the project.

Staffing Pattern

As this conference was held on a state in-service day, the regular functioning of the school day was not impacted. Sixteen volunteers from across the district were utilized. Staff from Red Clay Consolidated School District presented workshops or attended as conference participants. In addition, Red Clay staff members volunteered to assist during the conference by directing participants to their desired locations and/or collecting workshop evaluations throughout the day. Stakeholders from outside agencies also served as presenters and/or participants.

Population Served

Conference attendees represented a diverse group of professionals mostly from the school community. However, 60% of the attendees were non-Red Clay School District staff as this was a state in-service day. The breakdown of the 264 attendees that attended the conference were:

Administrators: 20
School Counselors: 43
School Support Staff: 27
Community Agency Staff/Politicians/Court Judges: 48
Teachers: 40
Presenters: 61
Truancy Officers: 12
Vendors: 13

- Number of students, subjects, or participants:
One of our partners included a panel of six students as part of their workshop presentation. We had two keynote speakers, 26 workshops, and 250 conference attendees.
- Participant selection criteria:
The conference was open to all school staff with support staff being our targeted audience. The conference was also open to community agencies, parents, students, and politicians.

Project Origination

The idea to host a dropout prevention conference originated in October 2011 during a discussion involving dropout data for our school district by a core group of committee members. During the discussion we came to the conclusion that hosting a conference at that time would be premature. Four years later, early Spring of 2015, we felt that the district data supported our work in reducing the dropout rate, and it was time to share with our stakeholders what we had learned and the successful strategies we utilized. At that time we began moving forward with the plans. We agreed to invite all of our stakeholders to participate either as attendees or as workshop presenters. Support for the dropout prevention conference was overwhelming as we had over 20 workshop presenters (see www.rcdop2016.com) and local support from several sponsors.

Our district level team decided to title the event “Dropout Prevention: Partnering for Success” and developed a schedule similar to those used at national conferences which include keynote speakers for general sessions and workshops targeted toward more specific topics. Our goal was to have 250 attendees from across the states of Delaware, lower New Jersey, and lower Pennsylvania. Invitations were given to school districts, churches, and parent groups asking for participation either as an attendee or possible presenter.

Issues Addressed

Even though we had reduced the dropout rate to slightly above 2% across our district, this project allowed us to instill the knowledge that we had gleaned with others and ensure others recognized the importance of lowering the number of dropouts in the school community.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives

- A minimum of 200 attendees at the dropout prevention conference from across the state.
- It was our desire that Red Clay School District be considered a leader in dropout prevention and set the example of partnering with outside agencies on behalf of students.
- Decrease the number of dropouts in our school system.

- Decrease the number of students having to take courses in our credit recovery program.
- Decrease the number of dropouts statewide.
- Provide workshops to share successful strategies.
- Increase stakeholder awareness of successful strategies in working with students identified as at risk of dropping out of school.

Our short-term objective was to decrease the number of dropouts in our school system and decrease the number of students having to take courses in our credit recovery program. It was our hope that school staff and community partners working together would impact those data points internally. The long-term objective is that statewide our number of students will decrease. Participants will take back to their respective school districts strategies to employ for the most vulnerable students and those identified as at risk of dropping out of school.

Strategies and/or Interventions

Strategies provided by presenters varied but included the 15 research-based strategies provided by the NDPC/N. Workshop descriptions can be viewed at www.rcdop2016

Project Timeline

November 2015	Initial planning/discussion of project
March 2015	Approval of project
April 2015	Conference planning
May 2015	Announcement of project and acquisition of partners
April 2016	Conference

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

Individual(s) with expertise in technology were necessary and instrumental in developing a Web site for marketing and conference registration. In addition, it proved beneficial to have developed positive relations with many community agencies prior to the event as we were soliciting their partnerships as attendees and/or presenters at the conference. Workshop presenters held expertise in their respective fields and were comfortable sharing those experiences and skills to an audience.

Outcomes and Achievements

We were successful in meeting the number of participants. In fact we exceeded our goal and had 250 registered attendees. We have were successful in providing 26 different workshops in which we will be able to share strategies that might benefit multiple stakeholder groups in their pursuit to decrease the dropout rate. The project outcomes exceeded our expectations. As noted in the program (see www.rcdop2016), we had two keynote speakers, a series of enthusiastic workshop presenters, and served the school community at large. Additionally, we had the Mayor of the City of Wilmington, the Secretary of Department of Education for the state of Delaware, and the Governor from the state giving brief discussion points for the general audience about the importance of having successful dropout prevention activities across the state.

Outcomes Related to School Completion and Graduation Rates

Outcomes were directly related to successful completion of school, caring for kids and their families, and with providing recovery strategies to retain kids in the school system with Individualized Success Plans. We won't know the metrics until the year following the conference, but it is hoped that a conference of this magnitude will impact attendees and their practices in their respective school systems.

Current Status of Project

Due to the success of the conference, it is our desire to host a dropout prevention conference every two or three years. However, our immediate next steps are to provide half-day and full-day workshops in the areas of understanding poverty and trauma-informed care to help professionals increase strategies in working with vulnerable and at-risk students.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant

I served as the lead in this project, and it was my responsibility to work with the core team to coordinate events for a successful conference.

Lessons Learned

It is imperative to

1. start early in the process in developing a conference;
2. identify key stakeholders and get their commitment far in advance;
3. set dates and times for program meetings with all stakeholders at least six months in advance;
4. allow partnering agencies to share their voice; and
5. stick to the plan once it is developed as there will be people who want to adjust the program once plans are in place.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners About the Project

My advice to any practitioner considering doing this project is first to plan well in advance and in collaboration with a team/committee before publicizing the project. Secondly, I would advise getting commitment from school district leadership to develop a meeting schedule for planning and developing a timeline to plan and manage a one-day conference which is both time consuming and requires multiple people involved.