

NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report

Mountain Education Charter High School: Success Stories

Bowman, Fannin, Forsyth, Gilmer, Habersham, Hall, Lumpkin, Pickens, Rabun,
Stephens, Union, and White Counties in the North Georgia Mountains

Final Project Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1RfKKAVSic&feature=youtu.be>

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Key words: student success

Mountain Education Charter High School: Success Stories

Funding Sources

Funds came out of Mountain Education Charter High School's central and technology budget.

Project Cost and Budget Narrative

A suitable camera, sound equipment, and editing software totaled the technology portion to equal around \$1,000. Four students made an extra trip to the school and received a \$10 gas card. Other expenses necessary for this project included mileage/travel reimbursement to the videographer, Victoria Stroud.

Scope and Setting

This project began in January 2016 and is currently still underway. Four variations of the Success Story videos have been uploaded to YouTube and shared with MECHS staff.

Staffing Pattern

All site directors, TEAM mentors, and counselors were notified of this project and were asked to collaborate and find students willing and ready to share their stories and testaments.

Population Served

Thus far, 44 MECHS students or graduates were interviewed for this project. Mentors, site directors, and counselors were all asked to find one to two students at their location who had a success story that they would like to tell on camera. Prompts were given to the students to prepare for their interview (see Appendix A). All participants signed a Media Release Waiver (see Appendix B) or had parents sign a Media Release Waiver on their behalf if they were under the age of 18. Not all student stories were included in the video, yet all of them are cherished and special.

Project Origination

Part of our school improvement plan is to increase the number of high school graduates and improve academic achievement. This project originated because Mountain Education Charter High School sent 13 members to GLISI. The focus of this conference was on improved academic performance as measured by Georgia's accountability system, College and Career Ready Performance Indicators (CCRPI). We have compared data over the last four years (see Appendix C).

Issues Addressed

After spending countless hours digging deep into each of these concerns, we felt that an understanding of "why" was necessary. "Why" do we do what we do? "Why" do we want to increase the high school graduation rate? Our students matter and they have a story. One positive relationship with a caring adult can make a difference in a student's life. If we don't hear their stories, it is possible that nobody will.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives

One measurable outcome is the number of times the video is watched. Currently, over 1,000 views on the videos signify an excellent representation of the awareness we hope to spread.

Strategies and/or Interventions

We used strategies while making these videos. First we assessed our audience to determine what they were interested in learning. Most of our audience would be educators or people who have had children, brothers, sisters, grandchildren, etc. in situations where a place like MECHS would have helped them. We wanted to show how MECHS can help any student work towards their high school diploma. Everyone has obstacles in their life; some people just have fewer people helping them to get over their obstacles, and that is where MECHS comes in to help. Other strategies are the use of employing YouTube, our website, and social media. We embedded links to continue tracking the views, yet sharing the content in an effective manner. We also assessed the watch time from previous videos. The average watch time seemed to be around three min. By the time we made the final video, we cut it down to just over three min long.

Project Timeline

The first video was made in January 2016 and the fourth video was completed in November 2016.

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

Special sound equipment, video equipment, editing software, student stories, help of all MECHS staff finding students willing to share, and support from our Superintendent were all conditions and expertise necessary to carry out the project.

Outcomes and Achievements

Finalized videos were the outcomes of the project as well as the accomplishment of our video going on the National Dropout Prevention Network website.

Outcomes Related to School Completion and Graduation Rates

This video encouraged some students to come back to school and encouraged others to keep going. As well, this video encouraged staff to continue working hard and to never give up. Every student matters and every student has a story.

Current Status of Project

We will continue making videos, but we will cut down the quantity. We will now do about one to two videos per year.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant

I was the leader, implementer, and designer of this project.

Lessons Learned

Editing takes a lot of time, but is very worth it to show our staff the hard work they are putting in for their students. It was so exciting to see certain staff members light up when they heard their names specified from a student as one who “cared about them the most.” No student is ever too lost to be turned around or to be cared about and loved.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners About the Project

Do something meaningful and something that you care about.

Appendix A

Interview Prompt Sheet

Name and Age

Do you work outside school?

Tell me about your job and how long you have worked.

Why did you leave your other school?

What was the biggest struggle at your other school?

When did you start going to MECHS?

How did you hear about MECHS?

What or who prompted you to come to MECHS?

Who cares about you the most?

Who cares about you the most at MECHS?

Have any adults in your life told you, “You can’t”?

Why is/was it important for you to graduate high school?

Have others in your family graduated high school?

What are your goals or dreams after you graduate?

Would you say you have become a better person by coming back to school?

Would you go back to your other school?

How are your classes at MECHS compared to your classes at your old school?

What is your opinion on what students need to be successful in life or high school?

If you could say one thing to someone debating on coming back to school, what would it be?

Appendix B
Media Release Form

In an effort to promote The Mountain Education Charter High School and publicize its success, MEC will be developing promotional photos and articles about students, and districts to tell their stories of how they have achieved their goals or provide alternatives and resources.

For valuable consideration, I give permission to be photographed, video taped, and interviewed for stories, articles or documentaries that may be produced to promote our school and school system, as it relates to promoting education technology throughout Georgia.

I consent to release the right and permission to copyright, publish or republish, and use in all forms and media and manners for advertising, trade, promotion, exhibition, or any other lawful purpose.

By signing this form I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to be bound thereby.

Date: _____

Student's Name: _____ (print)

Student's Signature: _____ (signature)

Site: _____

If this release is obtained from a student under the age of 18, then the signature of a parent or legal guardian is also required.

Parent or Guardian Name: _____ (print)

Parent or Guardian Signature: _____ (signature)

Appendix C
Data Comparison for Years 2012-2015

2012	MECHS	State
	Meets/Exceeds	Meets/Exceeds
9th Grade Lit	89.3	85.1
American Lit	90.9	89.8
Math I	73.3	67.2
Math II	56	61.5
Physical Science	87.5	77
Biology	76.5	74
US History	64.9	70
Economics	79.5	78.2
Progress	17.2	16.3
Achievement	30.3	43.1
Achievement Gap	10	11.3

2013	MECHS	State
	Meets/Exceeds	Meets/Exceeds
9th Grade Lit	92.5	86.7
American Lit	93.5	91.1
Coord Alg/GPS		
Alg/Math I	65.5	39
GPS Geo/Math II	58.1	67.3
Physical Science	81.7	82.5
Biology	75.9	75.5
US History	65.5	73.4
Economics	78.9	79.9
Progress	16.4	16.3
Achievement	29.7	43.6
Achievement Gap	11.3	8.7

Appendix C (Continued)

2014	MECHS Meets/Exceeds	State Meets/Exceeds
9th Grade Lit	94.3	88.4
American Lit	88.3	92.4
Coord Alg	17.6	40.7
Analytic Geo/GPS		
Geo/Math II	56.5	41.3
Physical Science	86.2	83.9
Biology	62	76.1
US History	70.1	73.5
Economics	77.1	81.9
Progress	16.5	15.7
Achievement	28.3	43.6
Achievement Gap	6.3	7.5

2015	MECHS Meets/Exceeds	State Meets/Exceeds
9th Grade Lit	48.52	61.22
American Lit	50	58.99
Coord Alg	54.16	52.68
Analytic Geo	43.47	55.45
Physical Science	41.5	50.73
Biology	48.03	56.47
US History	46.1	61.55
Economics	51.04	58.27
Progress	37.6	34.3
Achievement	18.3	32.8
Achievement Gap	7.8	6.7