

NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report

Relationship Matters @ Westbury High School
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD_im6SGK4LJipS9weHXIFA
Houston Independent School District
Houston, TX

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Key words: community involvement, mentoring, intervention

Relationship Matters @ Westbury High School

Funding Sources

- Fund-raising Income (bake sales)
- Houston Independent School District (in-kind)
- City of Houston Municipal Courts Department of Juvenile Case Manager Program

Project Cost and Budget Narrative

The Student Success Center conducted a daily bake sale “Pillsbury cookie dough” to fund the Relationship Matters campaign and all other activities. Annually, the Pillsbury cookie dough raised over \$20,000. Each tub of dough contains 0g trans fat, no partially hydrogenated oils, and no added preservatives. The cost for each tub is \$7.64 and makes 76 cookies and sells for two for a dollar.

Budget Detail:

Cost Category	Description	Quantity	Cost	Total
Vendors	Videographer	2	\$	\$ 7,000.00
Supplies	Microphone, Tripod, Memory Cards		\$	\$ 400.00
Monthly Champion Teacher/Staff Appreciation Luncheon	Baked Potato Bar, Tour of Italy, Christmas Party, Just Because, Mexican Fiesta, Hump Day	125 Champion Teacher/Staff	\$	\$ 3,500.00
Student Scholarships/Family Assistance	Dorm Deposits, Bus Fare, Dorm Essentials	23 Students	\$`	\$ 1,175.00
Other Expenses	Champion T-shirts, Student Apparel		\$	\$ 900.00
Field Trips	Student Team Building	227 Students	\$	\$ 2,258.00
Special Events/Outing Team Building Student Success Center Staff/Parent Engagement	Cheddar’s Casual Café, Applebee’s Kemah Boardwalk School Board Meeting	8 Events	\$	\$ 1,500.00
GRAND TOTAL				\$17,208.00

Scope and Setting

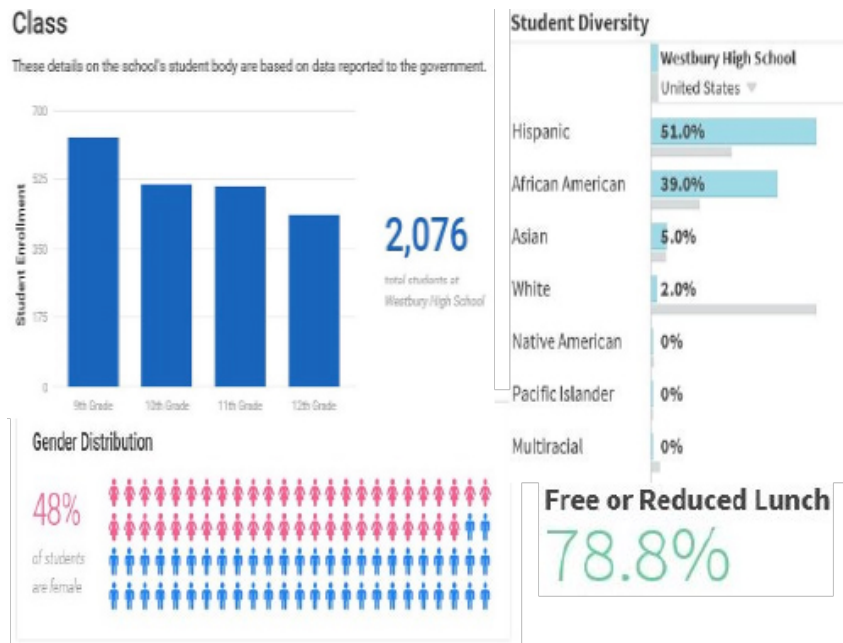
The Relationship Matters Campaign is a school reform effort that targeted students in all subgroups (economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, limited English proficient groups) who are most likely to drop out of high school.

Staffing Pattern

Westbury High School employs a full-time At-Risk Program Administrator and Student Caseworker who works directly with the at-risk population on campus. Westbury also works in collaboration with the City of Houston Municipal Courts Department with a Juvenile Case Manager.

Population Served

Westbury High School is a public magnet school in Houston, TX. It has 2,076 students in grades 9-12. According to state standards, 64% of students at this school are proficient in math and/or reading.



Project Origination

The Relationship Matters Campaign was inspired by Dr. Rita Pierson's TedTalk video *Every Kid Needs a Champion*. In that YouTube video Dr. Pierson talked about how “Kids don't learn from people they don't like” and called for educators to believe in their students and actually connect with them on a real, human, personal level. The Relationship Matters Campaign officially began August 1, 2015 with the rebranding of the school truancy office to the Student Success Center to reflect its mission and to coincide with the passing of Texas HB 2398, which ended the criminalization of truancy in the State of Texas. The Student Success Center was designed to help students graduate by accentuating the positive aspects of the team's efforts. The rebranding was launched in conjunction with other campus initiatives, including “Relationship Matters: Every Student Needs a Champion,” a yearlong, schoolwide awareness campaign which spotlights teachers who have made powerful connections with students and who have created classroom environments in which those young people thrive.

Issues Addressed

- Common reasons why students drop out of school include lack of family support, low academic achievement, and poor relationships with peers and teachers.
- Students who have negative relationships with teachers show evidence of frustration, anger, and irritability towards school and sometimes their outlook on life.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives

- Build stronger teacher-student relationships that will produce higher academic achievement and have more positive outlook on life.
- Create a climate that will help foster positive teacher-student relationships that will affect student's social and academic outcomes, and thus reduce dropout rates.
- More teachers will make an effort to connect with their most difficult students in their classroom by demonstrating knowledge about their interests, backgrounds, emotional strengths, and academic levels.

Strategies and/or Interventions

Strategies/interventions of the project incorporate multiple strategies with a learning environment where teachers are highly supportive of students and have a personal connection knowing their backgrounds so that they can connect what they learn to their instructional decision making.

Project Timeline

2015-2016 school year and ongoing

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

- Willing to do whatever it takes to help students reach a level of academic success.
- Promote and demonstrate respect for all students, inclusive of all races, ages, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, and abilities.

Outcomes and Achievements

The Relationship Matters program has positively affected a number of school factors that include emotional, social, and academic components in many key areas:

- Westbury Two-Year Attendance Rate: 2015-16 – 91.42%, 2014-15 – 89.24%.
Note: Westbury saw a 2.8 increase in their attendance rate over the previous year
- Decrease in student failure rate
- Reduction in discipline problems
- Positive social behavior among students
- Decrease in teacher absences

Outcomes Related to School Completion and Graduation Rates

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) will publish completion and graduation rates for the 2015-16 academic year after the new School Start Window (first day of school through last Friday of September 2016).

Current Status of Project

The Relationship Matters campaign will start year two at the beginning of the 2016-17 school year with the opening of a larger Student Success Center with more programs to help at-risk students.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant

As the creator and driving force behind the Relationship Matters campaign, I facilitated and oversaw all aspects of the campaign operations that included vision, strategic direction, and fund-raising.

Lessons Learned

Teachers are the most important group of professionals for the future of our nation. Teacher morale is vital to the success of student achievement. When teachers are happy they tend to have happy students who want to learn. “Psychology research has shown a strong link between happiness and success in the workplace” (Schiller & Hinton, 2015, retrieved from <http://time.com/3984782/happy-students-high-grades/>). After teachers were treated to lunch, received accolades and recognition for their hard work and dedication, there was a shift in student performance. Take care of those who take care of the students.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners About the Project

Dropout prevention practitioners must realize that in 21st century education, one size does not necessarily fit all. You must be resilient and steadfast in seeking ways to improve student achievement. This means working and communicating with all who have an impact on a student: parents, teachers, staff, cafeteria employees, bus drivers, custodians, and administrations.