

# **NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report**

## **McClarín Operation Graduation**

McClarín Success Academy

3605 Main Street

College Park, GA 30337

**Mr. Kedric Sledge, Social Worker**

McClarín Operation Graduation

*Key words:* nontraditional high school, credit recovery, mentoring, community involvement, Teacher as Advisor, Increased Learning Time, ILT

## McClarín Operation Graduation

### Funding Sources

School Improvement Grant (SIG) Funds

### Project Cost and Budget Narrative

The budget for Operation Graduation was an estimated \$260,000. The budget included human resources, which covered the following positions: social worker, graduation coach, parent liaison, and attendance specialist. Detailed amounts outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

#### *SIG-Funded Dream Team Human Resources*

Instructional Support Positions	Employees	Cost of SIG-Funded Position
Social Worker	Kendric Sledge	SIG covers 50% of position \$ 27,378.50
Graduation Coach	Shiamorra Green	SIG covers 50% of position \$ 27,882.00
Parent Liaison	Kasheena Adams	\$ 19,150.00
Attendance Specialist	Saletria Cail	\$ 29,536.80
Total Human Resource Budget Consideration		\$103,946.00

Additionally, in order to provide extended learning time for students, teachers and staff were paid to work extended hours after school, on Saturdays, and during the summer. Detailed amounts are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

#### *SIG-Funded Extended Learning*

Extended Learning Time	SIG-Funded Program
Saturday School—20 Saturdays 4 hours per Saturday, 5 Teachers, PAII Saturday School Administrator	\$ 21,600.00
Summer Bridge— 4-Week Summer School Session - 9:00 am - 1:00 pm 6 Teachers, PA II, Attendance Specialist Summer School Administrator, Counselor Social Worker	\$ 50,000.00
Extended Day Supervisor	\$ 8,960.00
Total funds needed for extended learning time	\$ 80,560.00

The final cost included in the budget was social and emotional support resources. In order to meet some of the unique needs of the students the following partnerships were developed: mobile health van to provide medical and dental services for student twice per week, individual and family mental health counseling, and a school-based mentoring program. The detailed cost is listed in Table 3.

Table 3

*SIG-Funded Social & Emotional Support Programs*

Social & Emotional Support Programs	Cost of SIG-Funded Program
Mobile Health Van	\$ 45,000
Mentoring	\$ 20,000
Counseling Services	\$ 10,000
Total Needed for Social & Emotional Support Services	\$ 75,000

**Scope and Setting (Prior to Implementation of the McClarin Operation Graduation)**

Frank McClarin High School is a nontraditional, open-campus high school for students seeking credit recovery or accrual. The school does not have its own attendance zone. It pulls students from all five South Fulton schools with the highest percentage of students coming from Banneker High School. Transportation is not provided to McClarin; most students take MARTA. The school’s main focus is to enable students to graduate with a diploma. McClarin serves students primarily in 10th-12th grades because of its policy that students must have five course credits to enroll, i.e., they must be sophomores. Enrollment numbers vary during the school year ranging from 200 to 350 students. The vast majority of our students, 93%, are African American; 52% are male; and 85% are enrolled in the free and reduced-priced meal plan.

The typical McClarin student is between the ages of 18-20. Students come to McClarin because they were not successful at their traditional high school. Many made poor decisions as they matriculated through high school, have lost one or both parents, are single parents themselves, or are working while completing high school.

McClarin’s instructional program is currently organized on a mini-mester plan. The school year is divided into four terms. Students who enter McClarin in August and exit in May have an opportunity to complete 16 classes, which is equivalent to eight credits by the end of the school year. Students entering during the school year have an opportunity to complete four classes per mini-mester, which is equivalent to two credits. The mini-mester schedule and the opportunities to retake tests during the year make it possible for students to proceed at their own pace and obtain the necessary credits gradually. Students typically attend classes from 8:15 am to 2:05 pm, Monday – Friday. The McClarin facility is not owned by Fulton County Schools but is leased from the City of College Park.

Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, the high school graduation rate was calculated using the four-year cohort calculation method. Based on this method, the graduation rate at McClarin in 2011 was 31.8% and dropped to 19% in 2012. Upon entering McClarin, most of our students are already considered “dropouts” based on the four-year cohort calculation, i.e., they will have difficulty graduating on time.

## **Staffing Pattern**

Dream Team Members:

- Dr. Lateshia Woodley (Project Director)
- Ms. Shiamorra Green (Graduation Coach)
- Mr. Kedric Sledge (Social Worker)
- Mrs. Ebony Payno (Head Counselor)
- Ms. Kimberly Elliott (Counselor)
- Ms. Saletria Cail (Attendance Specialist)
- Mrs. Garolyn Grooms (Records Coordinator)
- Ms. Sandra McKissic (Registrar)

## **Population Served**

- Students ages 16-21
- Teen Parents
- Homeless Youth

## **Project Origination**

The charge upon beginning this project was to create a sense of urgency to meet the needs of students attending McClarin, because it was considered one of the lowest achieving schools in the school district and the state. Based on a comprehensive needs assessment, the Dream Team was developed to champion many innovative strategies to drive improvement. The introduction of the dream team student circle of support concept is the one cause that I believe produced the most significant impact on the success of McClarin. The SST team, (“Dream Team”), includes the counselors, attendance specialist, social worker, graduation coach, parent/community liaison, and data and records clerk.

In order to prepare the Dream Team for the profound work that was envisioned, the team engaged in intense and intentional professional development allowing the team to become trained in dropout prevention strategies, whole child research, working with students in poverty, positive behavior intervention, and creating a culture of excellence and high expectations.

The team reviewed student achievement data and developed a comprehensive needs assessment. Based on the data, a holistic approach was designed to evaluate student achievement, student discipline, attendance, and to drill down data to the individual student level on a bimonthly basis.

## **Issues Addressed**

- Chronic Attendance Issues
- Failure Rates
- Literacy Rates
- Graduation Rates
- Social & Emotional Needs

## **Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives**

- Reduce course failure rate to 20% or less per subject course
- Reduce the number of students with 10 or more days absent
- Increase Graduation Rate by 10 percentage points or more

## **Strategies and/or Interventions**

The Dream Team implemented the use of student reform protocols to focus on dilemmas, misconceptions, and root causes. Based on this work, we led the team in the implementation of what is now known as Operation Graduation. Operation Graduation is a strategic breakdown of the entire

population of the school based on cohort. A personal profile was developed for each student. Students were tracked and assigned priorities based on their risk level toward graduation.

The master schedule was redesigned to provide flexible start and end times for teen parents, students that are head of households, and jobs. Extended learning time options were provided to extend the traditional school day from 8 am to 2 pm to 8 am to 7 pm. In addition, Saturday School and extending the school year provided a 4-week summer mini-mester.

#### *Mentoring—Schoolwide Advisory*

Research states that one of the major factors in student success is having a caring adult support them. In efforts to provide this circle of support, we implemented the Teacher as Advisor program. Students were assigned an advisor upon enrollment and remained with that advisor until graduation. Three days per week we stopped school for 45 minutes per day to focus on the social and emotional needs of students.

Additionally, we identified students who were in need of additional support and assigned them to our school-based mentoring program. The students were assigned to mentors with similar career interests and met weekly during their lunch hour. Each student enrolled in this program was provided a \$50.00 gift card for meeting or exceeding his/her academic goals.

#### *External Partners*

McClarín students are considered to be the most at-risk students in the district. Maslow hierarchy of needs research states that before you can reach the students to focus on academic needs their basic needs must be met. We implemented a community schools model to address the needs of students identified by the needs assessment. Some of the needs identified were: limited access to medical and dental services, lack of health insurance and/or lack of access to transportation to attend medical or dental appointments; mental illness, trauma, or family conflict; homeless and extreme poverty; limited vision or sense of hopelessness about the future; low self-esteem and major academic deficits and learning gaps.

Some of the programs implemented included:

- City of College Park—multiple support resources
- United Way—Future Foundation, Achievement Club, Community Building Institute
- Family's First—individual and family counseling
- Access Mental Health—anger management and substance abuse
- Stand up for Kids—mentoring services
- Family Health Centers of Georgia—mobile health and dental services
- Dress for Success—clothing closet
- Food Bank—backpack program for homeless students

#### *Tutoring—Increased Learning Time*

Within the structure of our dropout prevention project, students were afforded the opportunities to remediate and enrich as well as expedite their completion of career pathways through Increased Learning Time (ILT). Through ILT, remediation was offered to increase student achievement in reading, math, writing, and all other core subject areas. Instructional aides, such as READ180, Achieve 3000, STAR Math, Vantage Learning, and Edgenuity are utilized to supplement the curriculum in order to facilitate gains in areas of academic deficiency. On the other hand, enrichment opportunities are also offered through ILT. The enrichment courses include, but are not limited to the following: ACT/SAT Prep, Character Development, Art, Sign Language, Health/Fitness, Graphic Design, and many more as interests are expressed by the students. The ILT program allowed students to accelerate and remediate their learning based on their individual needs and contributed greatly to the increase in our graduation and program completion rates

### *Counseling and Guidance*

Utilizing the data derived from Operation Graduation, the counselors met with each student three times a year (Fall, Spring, and again with targeted students prior to each graduation in December and May) to extensively review their Success Report (status toward graduation). The report included a comprehensive overview of all courses needed to graduate, an action plan to meet graduation goals, and an identification of possible barriers to achieving set goals. Counselors also assisted in the development of each student’s personal profile to offer support in student’s social/emotional needs as well as teacher follow-up in tracking student’s academic progress in their courses.

### **Project Timeline**

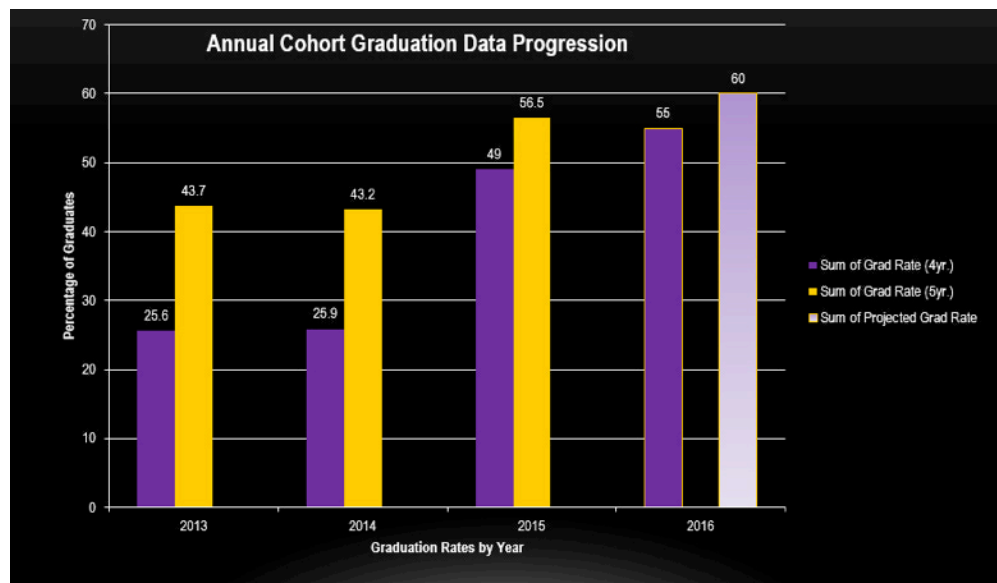
The Transformation project was designed for a scope of three years—2013-2016.

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

- Training in dropout prevention strategies
- Understanding students of poverty
- Data analysis and data usage

### **Outcomes and Achievements**

The work of this team formed the nucleus for the realization of our strategic goals of increasing academic achievement, increasing the graduation rate, and lowering chronic absenteeism. It is exciting to report that we have seen positive gains in every area. This is evidenced by McClarin being noted as the only high school to receive a Five Star Rating by the Georgia Department of Education and by a teacher winning the Innovative Teacher Award from the Georgia Office of Student Achievement. We received double-digit gains in our 2015 four-year cohort graduation rate moving from 25.9% to 49% (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Annual cohort comparison with 2016 projections.

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

Eighty-percent of the students that have entered our building graduated! For example, we had a total of 155 students that entered our building within the last four years that started high school the year of 2011, creating our 4-year cohort. Twenty-one of the 155 students we have verified and documented as transfers to other schools. Of the remaining 134 students in the 2015 cohort, 65 of them graduated providing us with a graduation rate of 48%. Of the remaining 69 students who will be considered dropouts by the GADOE, 42 are currently still active in our building and are on track to graduate, which will provide us with a completion rate of 80%.

## **Current Status of Project**

This project is a continuous effort to maintain an active approach to our student's everyday needs. The Dream Team continues to meet twice a month to review our ever-changing data pertaining to the Operation Graduation student profiles and address the academic and personal/social concerns for every student.

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

The social worker, in collaboration with the attendance specialist, implemented processes to improve attendance. He facilitated various mentoring programs within the school which addressed the high socio-emotional needs of the at-risk students that the school served, and provided mental health services to students and their households. More than 10% of the student body enrolled at McClarin High School is coded as being homeless unaccompanied youth. Therefore, the school social worker provided students and their families with shelter, food, and clothing under the Federal McKinney Vento Act. For the last three years, the school social worker also served as the evening school administrator allowing students to take additional courses until 7:00 pm Monday through Thursday. He also served as the Saturday School Administrator, opening the school building at 8 am on Saturday mornings, giving many students the opportunity to take advantage of additional course opportunities. While implementing these processes, the school social worker, with the assistance of other staff members, went out into the community and sought to build positive relationships with multiple community partners. These alliances helped to support the social and emotional needs of the students and their families.

## **Lessons Learned**

Each student has unique needs. Implementing the high-yield strategies from dropout prevention research and consistency through a team collaboration model has proven to yield awesome results. This work was not easy and took the efforts of many to yield the desired results. Documenting processes and strategies was so important in order for the work to live on through transitioning of team members in a school system.

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

Students may drop out for some reason. This does not mean we give up hope on student's graduating. Providing other options for students to graduate and simply listening can open doors of opportunities for students to be successful. Design your program around the needs of the students not the needs of the adults.