

## **NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report**

### **Central High School Dropout Prevention Program**

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# Central High School Dropout Prevention Program

## Funding Sources

Bureau of Indian Education

## Project Cost and Budget Narrative

The project used funds allocated for teaching and learning in Choctaw Central High School. Instructional monies were re-routed toward dropout prevention efforts as an educational environment paradigm shift was attempted. Dollars used previously for consultants, and performance rewards and incentives, financed the Choctaw Central High School Dropout Prevention Program. Additionally, these funds were used to promote better understanding among key stakeholders, students, parents, teachers and community members about the significance of dropout prevention.

## Scope and Setting

The project's scope was to reduce dropout rates at Mississippi's only secondary school for Native American students. The project was conducted at the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian Reservation, Choctaw, MS.

## Staffing Pattern

Staff members were assigned different duties during Student Advisory Group (SAG) activities and chaperoned students during community events. School leaders helped staff understand the paradigm shift by having them read articles, excerpts, and books.

## Population Served

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians as well as other Indigenous people who sent their children to Choctaw Central High School.

### Number of students, subjects, or participants

1200 students have been served using this program since 2012.

### Description of project participants (ages, grades, demographics, etc.)

Our school serves Native American students with a minimum one quarter Indigenous blood as indicated by a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) in accordance to Bureau of Indian Education policy. Choctaw Central High School is a ninth through 12th grade school providing a quality secondary education to Indigenous children exclusively; Ages of the student range from 14 to 19 years old.

### Participant selection criteria

All enrolled students at Choctaw Central High School.

## Project Origination

Project originated in response to data reported when Fredrick Hickmon began as principal. We had high dropout rate and a low graduation rate as compared with rates of the State of Mississippi. By using best practices of Professional Learning Communities as explained by Alan Blankstien in his book *Failure is not an Option*, as well as designing theoretical framework developed from W.E. Deming's "14 Points" and Reuven Feuerstein's philosophy on education.

## Issues Addressed

A high dropout rate was the primary issue addressed by the project. The dropout rate exceeded state and national averages thus making graduation rate an issue which we wanted to enhance when beginning the program.

## **Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives**

We measured dropout rates and graduation rates three years prior, compared to three years after the program's implementation. We desired to reduce dropout rates significantly while raising graduation rates.

## **Strategies and/or Interventions**

Clean production and effectively sharing data with all stakeholders were the strategies used in this project. Teachers, students, administration, and parents' use of shared data made discussions about student progress more informed and clear. Another strategy used was goal setting. With 24 credits needed to graduate, students were encouraged to "collect credits" their freshman and sophomore years while concentrating on college and career readiness their 11th and 12th grade years. With seven periods, or opportunities, per year, students began their junior year with over half the credits they needed to graduate. These truths were explained to the students as they were instructed on their contribution to success. Our belief was to begin effective change from within the school. Therefore the focus of this dropout prevention program began in teachers classrooms, specifically fifth period, our quasi-"homeroom". We chose fifth period since we had our highest daily population during this time and it was lunch hour where we could stay in classes for longer periods of time. Initially we began data discussions, in which the teacher spoke individually with each student about what areas in school they were struggling in based on their grades or ACT/ACT Aspire Data. If the area in which the student struggled was out of the teacher's scope, they contacted our RTI coordinator for tutorial services. A SAG was formed in which all staff members mentor students bi-monthly in a structured program. The SAG addressed of issues students face on a daily basis, including but not limited to abstinence, alcohol, peer pressure, bullying, drugs, and social media.

We began "Bring A Parent to School Day" which allowed parents to come to classes with their children. Teachers prepared lessons for parents as they experienced school with students. Afterwards we provided an open-ended constructed response evaluation of the school. Parents were also informed they can come and speak to teachers at their convenience. Other staff would be assigned to those classes when parents requested an audience with teachers.

Students participated in community events as volunteers. Serving in government events, cultural programs, and holiday occasions, our students spooned dinners, sang Christmas carols and ushered seating at events. Our school serves eight different communities and our students remain active, projecting the efforts and images of a quality education.

## **Project Timeline**

This project began four years ago and continues forward.

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

A school understood as a learning environment with certified teachers and counselors dedicated to the students.

## **Outcomes and Achievements**

Outcomes include, but are not limited to, a reduction of dropout rates at this high school by 50 percent. In addition graduation rate increased by 35 percent. A positive perception about the high school was measured as indicated by surveys completed by parents at different events.

## **Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates**

There was a positive correlation between lowering dropout rates and raising graduation rates.

**Current Status Project**

Thriving! We have added an American College Test (ACT) component to the original plan. Students are attending school to make sure they miss nothing to help them score higher on the ACT. A “20 Plus Club” highlighting individuals who score twenty or higher on the ACT has produce fierce competition between students to maximize their production in school.

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

I am a support person searching for data to assist in addressing why students quit school during their freshman and senior years of high school along with Fredrick Hickmon, Principal, architect, implementer and administrator of the project. The project came about from a five-year plan Mr. Hickmon submitted in 2012.

**Lessons Learned**

We cannot complete a task such as this alone. Many staff members were instrumental in the success of this project.

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

Develop plans using evidence-based best practices. Make your plan collectively with contributions from a sample of all stakeholders. Keep a focused timeline and create progress check points to determine the health of your project.