

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

### **Gaffney High School Bridge Program**

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*Key words:* Guiding student transition through mentoring.

## **Funding Sources**

The Dickens Fund, which is a local fund for Gaffney High School.

## **Project Cost and Budget Narrative**

- Total cost of project was approximately \$8,000.

This includes stipends and the following materials.

Classroom:

Book Bags Containing: 7 spiral notebooks, 4-1 inch 3 ring binders, 4 packs of loose leaf paper, 1 pack of mechanical pencils, 1 pack of ink pens (black ink), 1 pack of ink pens (blue ink), 1 pack of tab dividers, 1 pack of graph paper, 1 pack of highlighters, 1 school planner/ calendar.

Meals each day (breakfast and lunch).

## **Scope and Setting**

The Gaffney High School (GHS) Bridge Program is for at-risk students who are transitioning from middle school to high school (approximately 40-60 students invited). Research indicates that students who have trouble with attendance, behavior, and course failure (especially in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade) drop out of high school at higher rates than other students. The summer Bridge Program provides targeted interventions in these areas. The funds were used to purchase needed materials and for stipends for those working with the students. Also, national data indicates a need for students in STEM careers. Therefore, rising 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were exposed to STEM through robotics. The Bridge Program was housed at GHS' ninth grade wing.

## **Staffing Pattern**

**Administrators:** Dr. Raashad Fitzpatrick, Daniel Foster

**Data Collection & Analysis:** Dr. Amanda Ruppe, Beth Sartor

**Classroom Facilitators:** Frank Wilson, Christina Cody, Ruchi Dadheech, Brandon Watkins, Farrah Bauman, Lyric Knuckles, Shawn Corry, Kirkland Wray, Chris Hardy, Daniel Foster

## **Guest Speakers:**

- Tangi Rosenboro—Lifelong Gaffney resident who runs a non-profit titled “We Girls Rock” that promotes and empowers females from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- Marcus Bradley—Director of the local recreation department and lifelong Gaffney resident. He encourages students to get involved in extracurricular activities.
- Terrance Smith—Youth Football Coach/Community Activist and lifelong Gaffney resident. Mr. Smith encourages the students to take advantage of the opportunities given to them and use the resources around them and most importantly, never give up.
- Sheriff Steve Muller—speaks on “The Law and You”. He encourages positive relationships between the youth and law enforcement.

- Lyric Knuckles—Lifelong Gaffney resident, recent GHS graduate and current college student. Ms. Knuckles bridges the age gap and speaks about what to expect in college and how to be successful at GHS.
- Know2 Representatives—Local non-profit that was created to help seek and provide the betterment of all things in Cherokee County. Their one day session is titled “The Game of Life.” During this “game” the students are asked what kind of career, car, lifestyle, etc. they would like. Then representatives factor in the education, etc. required to meet the students’ goals.

### **Population Served**

Number of students, subjects or participants

- Year one—27
- Year two—28
- Description of project participants (ages, grades, demographics, etc.)
  - Student range from ages 14 yrs old to 16 yrs old upon entry into the Summer Bridge Program. Socio-economic circumstances played no part. In order to be promoted from 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 10<sup>th</sup> grade students must have a total of 5 credits earned, 2 of which must be English and Math. Grade scale as follow: 100-90 A, 89-80 B, 79-70 C, 69-60 D, 59-below D.
- Participant selection criteria
  - Middle school guidance counselors and administrators were charged with selecting students based on low academic performance, high discipline referrals, and/or issues with truancy.

### **Project Origination**

Daniel Foster (GHS graduation coach) attended an NDPC conference, where he learned how summer programs were being used to bridge the gap. He then researched and implemented a program at GHS.

### **Issues Addressed**

- Ease the transition from middle school to high school
- Low academic performance
- High discipline referrals
- Truancy

### **Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives**

- Lower the dropout rate
- Raise the graduation rate by lowering the number of 9<sup>th</sup> grade repeaters each year
- Increase students end of year grade average
- Decrease the number of days missed by students with truancy issues
- Decrease the number of referrals for students with discipline issues

## **Strategies and/or Interventions**

- Day 1
  - Study skills
  - Conflict resolution
- Day 2
  - Character education
  - “The Law and You”
- Day 3
  - Gender based sessions: “girl talk” and “man up”
- Day 4
  - Social skills
  - Positive decision making
- Day 5
  - Student Survey
  - GHS Registration which allows the student to receive their schedule early
  - How to navigate high school (walk off their schedules)
  - BBQ lunch

**Project Timeline?** 4-5 day intensive sessions, as listed above, during the summer before entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The students will then be tracked for the rest of their high school career at GHS. The students will also be monitored and guided throughout the year by Mr. Foster (GHS graduation coach).

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

The right people must be present. One caring adult can make the difference for a struggling student.

## **Outcomes and Achievements**

The cohorts being used in this study are currently rising 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders. Outcomes, results, and achievements will be reported after the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort has completed 4<sup>th</sup> year of high school. Diploma Graduates are the desired outcome.

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

The students participating in this project are currently in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, therefore the graduation rate outcome cannot be determined. Grade level completion and individual improvement are the goals for the project.

## **Current Status Project**

The Bridge students are constantly being monitored. The majority of the students in the Bridge program are improving on all measured levels. The students who have not improved on all levels have usually improved on 1-2 levels and are being more closely monitored through RtI and other means. The program continues to grow and will continue again during the summer.

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

- **Dr. Raashad Fitzpatrick—Principal—**
  - Allocating funds-the funds for this project are through a local Gaffney High School Fund that requires a submission of need to the local Dickens Board. The Board then approves the funds and must constantly be kept abreast of their use.
  - Oversee all facets of the Bridge Program
  - Tracking Students-
    - Constantly monitor grades, attendance, discipline, etc. for variation.
  
- **Daniel Foster—Graduation Coach—**
  - Project Creator-the Bridge Program was created after Mr. Foster attended an NDPS presentation with the hopes that Gaffney High Schools students could benefit and transition to high school in a more positive way.
  - Project Director, responsible for the following:
    - Selection and monitoring of the program staff
    - Scheduling of the location, meals, and sessions
    - Accumulation and assembling of student supplies
  - Tracking Students
    - Constantly monitor grades, attendance, discipline, etc. for variation.
  - Counseling
    - Bring students in and speak with them to determine:
      - If they are having problems with anything at the school/academic level
      - What may be a reason for a decline at any level
      - See how they are doing and just let them know that somebody cares about them.
      - The teachers at Gaffney High School constantly contact Mr. Foster if they notice a student who may be in need of a mentor or just someone to help put them on a more positive path. Mr. Foster does this for his Bridge students as well as other students.
  
- **Dr. Amanda Ruppe—Assistant Principal**
  - Data Analysis-
    - Accumulate middle school and high school data to include, grades, attendance, test scores, discipline, etc.
    - Compare the data to determine improvement and/or decline following the Bridge Program
  - Tracking Students-
    - Constantly monitor grades, attendance, discipline, etc. for variation.
  - Counseling students to determine:
    - If they are having problems with anything at the school/academic level
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- What may be a reason for a decline in any level of concern.
- See how they are doing and just let them know that somebody cares about them.
- **Beth Sartor—Math teacher—**
  - Data Analysis-
    - Compare the data to determine improvement and/or decline following the Bridge Program
  - Tracking Students-
    - Assist with monitoring grades, attendance, discipline, etc. for variation

### **Lessons Learned**

- Not all of the students invited will show up
- Not every student recommended for the program will truly be at-risk but all students can benefit from the program
- Program success is largely dependent on community and middle school buy-in.
- Transparency between schools (Elementary to Middle to High) is hard to achieve. Constant communication will foster this.

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

- Know your kids
- Set reasonable goals
- Tailor your program to the needs of your students.
- Be that caring adult
- BE CONSISTENT in all things.
- **LOVE YOUR KIDS!!**