

NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report

Enterprise High School

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Funding Sources

Enterprise High School a publicly-funded charter school.

Project Cost and Budget Narrative

We receive funding from the Pinellas County School District. The actual amount received depends on the number of students enrolled and present during 2 two-week FTE periods, one in October and another at the end of January/beginning of February. We currently base our budget on 360 students but have had as many as 415. Our total expected funding for the 2017-2018 school year is anticipated to be \$2,293,205.

Scope and Setting

Enterprise High School is one of four schools in Pinellas County dedicated to serving at-risk youth. We are located behind a strip mall at one of the busiest intersections in the county. The location is ideal as it is served by multiple city bus routes. As a charter school, we are not served by the county school bus system but instead provide students with city bus passes for free. We have two shifts for students to attend, a 7 AM to noon shift and a noon to 5 PM shift. Students with special circumstances (work, childcare, etc.) are able to request a special pass that allows them to “bridge” the shifts. We use an online curriculum (APEX) that allows students to work at their own pace and get caught up on schoolwork. Some students choose to return to their original high school once they catch up but the overwhelming majority choose to stay and graduate with us. We are the only school in the county that has both a December and a May graduation.

Staffing Pattern

Since we are open 10 hours every day, staff member schedules are staggered, with some beginning at 6:30 am, some at 7:30 am, and some at 8:00 am. Teachers who stay for the last hour (4-5 pm) receive additional compensation. We have nine full-time teachers, two part-time teachers, three Exceptional Student Education (ESE) specialists, one ESE paraprofessional, one technology coordinator, one bilingual aide, one DMT, one psychologist, one vocational specialist, one enrollment specialist, one administrative assistant, one receptionist, one graduation coach, one director, and one assistant director.

Population Served

Number of students, subjects, or participants

We serve students ages 16 to 21 (22 if they have an IEP). Over 70% of our students receive some sort of government assistance.

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

Our population is almost evenly split between male and female students. 30% of our population is African-American, 60% Caucasian, and 10% Hispanic/Latino. The one thing that unifies all of our students is that their traditional high school did not work for them.

Participant selection criteria

Approximately 30% of our students qualify for ESE (Exceptional Student Education) services, either gifted or disabled. All but one of our ESE students fall in to the latter group.

Project Origination

Enterprise High School was first chartered ten years ago to specifically target at-risk youth. We have gone through many changes since founding, including two management companies (we are now independent), a change of name, and changes in location. I am currently in my third year at Enterprise and will focus on the changes and results seen during my tenure.

Issues Addressed

We help struggling students graduate on time, older students get their high school diploma, students with GPA issues get back on track, and students that have received Certificates of Completion pass the required state testing and convert to standard diplomas.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives

We are in a process of continuous improvement. The school district sets annual goals for us in areas including federal four-year graduation rate, number of credits earned by students, math and reading pass rates, and testing percentage. Like most alternative schools in Florida we receive a school improvement rating instead of a school grade.

Our measurable graduation goal for 2014-2015 was 20%, for 2015-16 25%, and for 2016-17 32%. The school improvement rating looks at reading and math learning gains as well as testing percentage, and the goal is always to earn the highest rating, “commendable.”

Strategies and/or Interventions

Since I have started working at Enterprise High School we have implemented a number of new strategies and interventions.

Our Child Study Team meets weekly to determine attendance patterns.

We have hired a full-time Graduation Coach who focuses on getting students to graduate on time.

We have three full-time ESE specialists who spend the majority of their time helping students in the classroom.

We hired two part-time teachers using Title I funds and have decided to keep them on staff even though we did not receive Title I funds for the 2017-2018 school year.

We have implemented a new reading program, a new writing program, and a new math program to assist those students who need to pass the state tests. These programs are closely aligned to the state-mandated tests.

We started offering the ACT in-house during the school week last year with tremendous success. This year we plan on offering the SAT as well.

We established an RTI team two years ago. Additionally, I closely monitor the cohort students and make sure that those students who have stopped attending have the right exit code. Many of our students come from highly mobile life situations and move frequently, often without informing the school. I find them and make sure they are enrolled elsewhere.

Project Timeline

We are evaluated annually by both the district and the state.

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

Many of our students have experienced or are experiencing significant levels of trauma. Many have mental health issues. Our staff is trained regularly on how to best work with these students. Everyone on staff must have a great deal of patience and empathy – and be wary of the signs of compassion fatigue.

Outcomes and Achievements

Since I started at Enterprise High School the graduation rate has increased from 17% to 27% and this year we experienced a 34% graduation rate. These numbers refer to the four-year federal rate – our overall graduation rate varies between 70 and 80%.

Additionally, our School Improvement Rating has increased from “Declining”, to “Maintaining”, to this year, “Commendable”, with total component points putting us in the top 2.5% of alternative schools in the state. Additionally, we received the most component points of any alternative school in Pinellas County.

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

Our efforts and initiatives have directly impacted our graduation rate. In addition, offering morning and evening session allows students who may have dropped out of school due to scheduling issues a more flexible way to complete their coursework.

Current Status Project

Enterprise High School is a year-round program and strives to continually improve. We are planning a new student orientation process for the 2017-2018 school year. Additionally, we will be applying for our charter renewal this year.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant

I was hired as the Guidance Counselor and quickly promoted to Assistant Director, the position I currently hold. I served as Acting Director for a short time during our Director's absence.

I serve on the RTI team, Child Study Team, monitor school goals and progress, and ensure that our data is "clean" and accurate. I assign students to classes and homerooms, review their remaining requirements, and monitor their progress.

Lessons Learned

Through careful and collaborative planning any school can meet their goals and continuously improve.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners About the Project

The most important aspect of any dropout prevention program is your staff. Treat them well and they will consistently exceed expectations. The relationship component is absolutely essential, and staff turnover can destroy it. Since I have been working at Enterprise we have not had a single staff member resign. The other dropout prevention programs in our district experience extremely high turnover, with teachers and administrators regularly leaving mid-year.