

Gaffney High School Bridge Program

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Key words: **student transition, mentoring, community partner**

Project Funding Source:

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

Project Cost and Brief Budget Narrative:

Total project cost is approximately \$8,000. This includes stipends and the following materials:

- Classrooms
- Freshman 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 black ink pens
 - 1 pack of blue inch pens
 - 1 pack of tab dividers
 - 1 pack of graph paper
 - 1 pack of highlighters
 - 1 school planner/calendar
- Meals for each day--breakfast and lunch

Project Description:

The Gaffney High School 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 9th 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 9th grade students were exposed to STEM through robotics. The Bridge Program was housed at Gaffney High School (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 called “We Girls Rock” that promotes and empowers females from low socio-economic backgrounds
- Marcus Bradley—director of the local recreation department/Lifelong Gaffney Resident. He encourages students to get involved in extracurricular activities at the rec or GHS or other
- Terrance Smith—Youth Football Coach/Community Activist/Lifelong Gaffney Resident. He 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 grad/college student. She 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. He does a one-day session called “The Game of Life.” During this “game” the students are asked, “What kind of career, car, lifestyle, etc. do you want?” Then the representative factors in the education, etc. required to meet your goals.

Population Served:

- Number of students, subjects or participants
 - Year one—27
 - Year two—28
- Description of project participants (ages, grades, demographics, etc.)
 - Refer to attached chart
- 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:

After Mr. Daniel Foster (GHS Graduation Coach) attended a National Dropout Prevention conference, 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 9th 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

What were the strategies and/or interventions of the project?

- 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 9th 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 in a struggling student.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

Bridge year	2015		2016	
	#	%	#	%
Reduced Referrals	12	44%	22	79%
Reduced Truancy by 6 or more days	0	0%	3	11%
9th grade Increased grade	9	33%	8	29%
9th grade increased grade or grade stays the same	17	63%	24	86%
10th grade Increased grade	18	67%	NA	NA
10th grade increased grade or grade stays the same	22	81%	NA	NA
Total in program	27		28	

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

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

Current Status of 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. 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
 - 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.

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 other dropout prevention practitioners:

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