

Building a Culture of Hope through College and Career Readiness

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Funding Sources:

Medford School District General Funds, Oregon Youth Development Grant, WIOA Funds (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act), Local grant from the Leightman-Maxey Foundation

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

Ongoing costs/funding has not been an issue.

Project Description:

This project was conducted at Central Medford High School (CMHS) in partnership with Rogue Community College, Southern Oregon University, College Dreams, Mt. Ashland, SOU Farm, other internship locations.

CMHS was established in 2010 and up until this project the school mission was only focused on students completing their high school diploma by the time they were 21 years of age. I set out to establish a partnership with a local grassroots organization, College Dreams and together we applied for an Oregon Youth Development Grant in the amount of \$100,000 for every 2 years of funding that included a match of \$40,000 by the school district general fund. This was the start to a comprehensive college and career readiness program at CMHS that included:

- A full-time College Dreams counselor on site at CMHS, case managing all post-secondary plans and activities
- All students take a Career Interest Inventory and identify a career pathway domain that was then identifiable on their student profile
- Community college tours taken all over Oregon
- FAFSA form filled out in a student's graduating year
- Early College Entrance to RCC if interested, tuition and books provided by MSD general fund
- Paid internships at Mt Ashland, SOU Farm was established but company or organization that a student was interested in, could access a paid internship
- Several dual credit college courses taught on site at CMHS

Staffing Pattern:

Amy Herbst, Principal, Brian Corbett, Drop-out Prevention Coordinator and Troy McNichols, College Dreams Counselor. CMHS teachers certified in dual college credit with RCC.

- College Dreams Counselor
- Dropout Prevention Coordinator (MSD general fund)
- Guidance Counselor
- 8 out of 16 licensed teachers volunteered to certify their course offerings as dual college credit
- Principal held the vision and continued moving it forward

Population Served:

Number of students, subjects, or participants: Available to all 230 students at CMHS.

- Description of project participants (ages, grades, demographics, etc.): 10-12th graders of CMHS the alternative high school that is Title 1 and has high transient population and registers 350 students throughout the school year.
- Participant selection criteria. All students eligible to take CollegeNow courses at CMHS. Must have good attendance, behavior and show competency to attend classes on the RCC campus for the early college program.

Project Origination:

This project was identified as a School Improvement Plan (SIP) goal by the staff and principal at CMHS. The goal was in alignment with the MSD Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) goal to increase graduation rates and enhance post-secondary plans for all students.

Issues Addressed:

The CMHS mission is to engage the high school students of the Medford School District towards graduation and dissuade them from giving up hope and dropping out. 10-12th graders are referred to CMHS by 2 comprehensive high schools when they become unsuccessful in their home school. CMHS students often have academic, emotional or behavioral challenges. CMHS must be innovative in approach in order for students to continue their education towards a diploma. Students often do not make the connection between a high school education and success in college or career.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

- Increase in graduation rate and decrease drop-out rate
- Increase the number of students that enroll in college
- All students explore and identify their personality traits and career interest pathways
- Increase attendance rates
- Increase hope and engagement

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

- All students identify Career Interest through the CIS program
- Career Pathway uploaded onto the Student Demographic and worked with IT on this.
- Partnered with RCC to certify 8 staff members to teach CollegeNow (dual college credit) courses at CMHS
- College Dreams Counselor case manages for paid internships and post-secondary plans
- Home visits weekly with the Drop-Out Prevention Coordinator
- Community Colleges in Oregon tour visits
- Annual Parent Guidance Night to present College and Career Readiness
- Survey whole school on hope and engagement through a YouthTruth Survey

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

- Capacity for all students to start a college transcript prior to a HS diploma
- Capacity for all students to have a PAID internship experience
- YouthTruth survey results on hope, engagement and college preparedness are highest among the high schools in the Medford School District
- Attendance rates went from 65% to 70%

Project Timeline:

The rollout of this project began in Fall of 2014 with the award of the YDC grant in partnership with College Dreams until present. Every year we have continued to enhance the opportunities for dual college credit and paid internships.

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

CMHS went from 50 to 100 graduates after having implemented this program. The difference in graduation rates from before was at 19% to 2017 where we celebrated a 33% graduation rate (which only includes our 4th year graduates). Our completer rate has been consistent every year at 50%.

When CMHS made a 9% graduation rate gain between 2013 and 2014, so did the Medford School district from 67% to 76%.

Special Conditions, Expertise, and/or Skills Required to Carry Out Project:

- Community partnerships were key in the implementation and the sustainability of this project. Principal hosts a community partner meeting 3-4 times a year to continue to keep enhancing our school improvement goal of college and career readings.
- The willingness of teachers to utilize their own teaching licensure and voluntarily put in the work needed to certify to offer dual credit courses.
- The relationship and rapport that all staff, but especially the Drop-out Prevention coordinator and the College Dreams counselor has with students is invaluable.

Status of Project:

Ongoing and continue to enhance and build.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

In the principal role, I led the vision and carried out implementation with the community partner relationships. Hosted many meetings and continue to build the capacity and sustainability of this comprehensive college and career readiness program.

Lessons Learned:

That students need to see a sense of purpose in order to persevere. Students that experience many challenges and barrier often lose hope and building that culture of hope in a school is vital to success.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

Engage with community partners and start small. Build capacity as you go along to allow for this project to be rooted as a practice in your school, so it is sustainable.