

National Dropout Prevention Certification Field Project

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Success Mentoring Initiative Program

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Key words: **Mentor, Success, Attendance, Engagement, Graduation, Coach, New York**

Funding Sources:

The Child Center of New York and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT)

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

Total project cost is \$26,198.00. This budget includes staffing costs (4 staff members), incentives, and events.

Project Description:

The Success Mentoring Initiative Program worked with and supported existing school structures to improve chronic absenteeism and improve overall retention. The program provided an environment where participants were able to form positive relationships with adults and peers, build academic confidence, and develop their assets and resiliencies so they are cognitively, socially and emotionally competent.

Monday through Thursday, from 10am-1pm staff focused on meeting with their assigned mentees, reviewed attendance trends and patterns (aggregate and individual) through the Data Sorter tool (daily attendance tracking). Staff would go through mentees files to see most recent check in date, and also sort through mentee schedules to determine each official attendance class. If a mentee had not followed up within the last week, staff would then go to their assigned mentee during that period for a quick check in (this can also include lunch period). Staff also focused on Parent/Guardian outreach and meetings with the school attendance team to discuss important updates. Fridays from 10am-6pm staff focused solely on mentor follow-ups and incentive event planning.

Staffing Pattern:

Program Coordinator (1) Engagement Specialist (3) Volunteer Teacher Mentors (9)

Population Served:

127 high school students (grades varied from 9-12) whose attendance for the year was deemed as chronically absent. Demographic breakdown: Hispanic: 45.9%, African American: 45.5%, Asian: 5.3%, White: 2.4%, Other: .9%

Project Origination:

This project was originated by the need to increase overall attendance and retention within the school, to reduce dropouts and to re-engage youth.

Issues Addressed:

Shifting mindsets of both students and adults
Determining the reasoning for students who choose to not attend classes
Maintaining accurate attendance data
Communication between school and guardians

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

Our desired outcome was to see an increase in student/ school attendance percentages.

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

- a) Intensive tracking and monitoring of absences, with a specialized focus on engagement of students identified as chronically absent.
- b) Providing students/families that are identified as at-risk of discharge with external resources which can provide them with additional support.
- c) Providing student engagement events and assembly presentations.
- d) Providing monthly rewards and an incentive ceremony for students who reach their attendance goals.
- e) Providing school with collected data in a timely manner at weekly attendance meetings.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

Recording results from March 2018-June 2018, we maintained a steady increase of attendance with our mentees which, in turn, helped the overall school attendance percentage. This was possible by having consistent communication and building trusting relationships with mentees, breakfast events to welcome students as they entered the building, and monthly movie ticket incentives for all students in the initiative whose attendance was 90% or better for the month.

Project Timeline: March 2018-June 2018

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

Focusing on two mentees in particular; one gentleman's attendance for the year in March was 57% and over the course of the year improved to 70%. Another gentleman had returned from being incarcerated and was struggling to stay on task. By June, his attendance had sky rocketed to 90%. I am proud to say with consistent check-ins, follow-up meetings and open communication both young men graduated from high school and are positive, successful members of their community. Besides these two amazing improvements with specific students, this initiative made an impact on school retention and consistent attendance. In the previous school year, attendance fluctuated on a month to month basis. With our 127 students in this initiative, individual attendance was maintained at an 80% or higher from March-June 2018, which in turn raised the entire school retention number. By June, we saw an overall increase of 3% in attendance.

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

Expertise in behavior management, data retrieval, and high school education was required.

Current Status of Project:

The Success Mentoring Initiative for 2018 has been completed.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant: Engagement Specialist, Mentor

Lessons Learned:

The greatest lesson taken from this project was that our youth appreciate having someone who believes in them, shows consistent support and values their time. Having consistent communication with guardians is just as important to see desired results.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

My biggest word of advice would be to practice patience; Patience with yourself and patience with those around you - especially our youth. It may take some young adults much more time to open up than others, but when we are consistent and show we care, it is worth much more to our youth than any prize we could offer.