

**PASS Time**  
**(Promoting Academic Student Success)**

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***Key words:*** Relationship Building, Character Education, Credit Recovery, Reduced Absenteeism, Reduce Dropout Rate, Real Life Applications, Soft Skills, Replacement Behaviors

**Funding Sources:**

The project began with no additional funding sources. Applications for additional funding sources to expand the program were made in 2017, 2018 and 2019. In the fall of 2018, a grant was approved to add a temporary paraprofessional position. The additional position is utilized to follow-up with parents regarding student absences and tardiness. The person in this position works with students on lagging skills. Staff members volunteer their time for field trips requiring overnight travel or field trips beyond contract hours.

**Project Cost and Budget Narrative:**

There are three separate budget items for the program. The first budget line item is for clubs and has a budget of \$2,000 per school year. The second budget line item is for PASS time and has a budget of \$3,000 per school year. The third budget line item is for the incentive field trips, and there is a budget of \$4,000 per school year.

**Project Description:**

The setting of the project is an alternative high school (Skyline Academy) located in rural Wyoming and utilizes the classroom and the community. The project focuses on four areas: Character Education, Circle Time, PASS Time, Incentive field trips, and Club Time.

The scope of this project is to:

- keep students engaged in school
- reduce dropout rates
- build relationships with parents/guardians
- create time to build relationships among staff and students
- enhance civic skills
- keep students engaged and reduce incidences of adverse behaviors
- assist students in developing social skills
- promote that learning is more important than grades
- link character education to real-world applications
- build soft skills
- develop lagging skills

**Character Education**

Character Education is a 40-minute class that takes place Monday through Friday and focuses on teaching soft skills and developing the student's character and citizenship.

The following schedule outlines the lesson plan for the week, and three teachers rotate teaching Character Education. Character lessons are designed around relationships, responsibility, and respect.

Monday-Overview, ethical dilemma questions

Tuesday-Character Movie/Discussion questions

Wednesday-Reading of a role model/Quiz

Thursday-Speaker/Speaker notes

Friday-Assignment and rewards

### **Circle Time (Restorative Justice)**

Circle time takes place on Friday and is a time when students and teachers sit together in a circle and discuss subject matter that meets the needs of the group. Circle time allows teachers and students to have a weekly check-in. Circle time subjects often begin with humorous or non-serious subject matter and develop into topics of a more serious nature. There are 25 minutes allowed for these discussions, and the students set the rules and guidelines for this discussion time. The group sticks to the 25-minute time limit unless the group decides the needs of the group require extending this time.

### **PASS Time-(Promoting Academic Student Success)**

PASS time occurs on Fridays and is a program developed to encourage students to be on time to school and passing classes. If students are not eligible for PASS time they receive academic support services. Students that qualify for PASS time are passing all of their classes and do not require extra help. Students in PASS time can participate in a reward that includes food, drinks, movies, video games, and social time.

### **Club Time**

Students have the opportunity to pick from four selected clubs. Clubs have included: cooking, entrepreneurship, board game club (one of our most popular), outdoor recreation, crafts, and photography. Club time changes every four weeks and is designed to build a relationship between students and teachers. Club time is a time for students to pursue interests without risk and explore possible careers, all while having fun.

### **Incentive Field Trip**

Students have the opportunity to participate in monthly field trips based on Character points they earn. Based on character expectations, teachers utilize an app to give students positive and negative points. Students receive a paycheck each week informing students of the number of points they earned and comments to support the points. Students can cash point in for Amazon gift cards and incentive field trips. Incentive field trips have included trips to an escape house, skiing, Haunted Mill, skating, and movies. The trips allow staff and students to build relationships and helps students to engage with staff outside the school and classroom. The school provides meals to students and staff at local restaurants, and this is an opportunity for students to learn manners and social skills.

### **Block Scheduling**

Students focus on meeting core class requirements and receive a half credit approximately every three weeks. Block scheduling has increased student attendance and motivation because the students can see the result of their hard work every three weeks. Students review their official transcript at the end of the block and record the new half credit on their student success plan.

### **Staffing Pattern:**

The staffing pattern for this project began with four staff members in 2017-2018 and five staff members for the second semester of the 2018-2019 academic year.

**Population Served:**

The population served by this project are students at an alternative high school. The participants of these projects are high school students ranging in age from 14-19 years of age. All the students in the school are required to participate in all the areas of Character Education (students receive a ¼ credit every semester); students do not receive credit for participation in PASS time, Family time or Club time.

**Project Origination:**

Character education was originally called career planning and was not meeting the needs of the students. The program was restructured, and there have been improvements in student attendance and a reduction in unwanted behavior in the school. Incidents of ISS and OSS have been reduced, and graduation rates have gone up.

Through collaboration and attendance at several conferences, the staff developed the idea of PASS time, club time, incentive field trips, block scheduling, and circle time. The development of these ideas works together to support relationships, responsibility, and respect. Students are engaged in the educational process and are motivated to attend school.

**Issues Addressed:**

The needs met by the project increased student attendance and ultimately graduation rates through student engagement. Ultimately, the staff sought to increase their relationship with their students and teach them to be lifelong learners. Students are taught to take responsibility for their actions and decisions.

**Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:**

The desired outcomes and measurable objectives were to increase attendance and graduation rates. We did not begin our current initiative until the spring of 2017, and according to our early results, we have positive results for character education, PASS time and club time. We did see an increase in attendance and graduation rates. Additionally, the staff is hoping to improve the career options for students. Skyline Academy is five years old, and this year we called graduates and collected data on our first-year graduates. The results are positive but do not reflect any of the current objectives of the current projects.

**Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:**

The intervention built into the project is PASS Time because students that are missing work or failing classes are not eligible to participate in PASS Time activities. If a student is missing an assignment or failing, academic support is initiated. When the project began, there were 1%-3% of the students participating in PASS Time. Since the introduction of the block schedule and buy-in by the students, there is an 80%-100% participation in PASS Time activities.

The 2018-2019 academic year brought the addition a Tier II intervention were students, who are failing classes at the end of the second week of the block or have three absences or tardies are referred to a Tier II intervention. Students are required to complete a project that addresses the lagging skill that is contributing to the academic or behavior problem.

**Results (Outcomes and Achievements):**

The school continues to make adjustments to the programming and curriculum. The students and the staff continue to develop relationships, and students are working on peer-to-peer relationships. The staff has expanded relationship development and outreach to the community and families.

As a result of the project initiative, the State of Wyoming has recognized Skyline Academy and the 2018 graduation rate of 100%.

**Project Timeline:**

The 2017-2018 is the first complete year for the project. Before the 2017-2018 academic year, the school was utilizing monthly behavior field trips as a positive reward for desired behavior. However, the staff realized, for many of the students, waiting for one month to acknowledge appropriate behavior was too long of a wait. The school began utilizing a program, in the Spring of 2018, that allowed teachers, students and parents to track positive and negative behaviors, and students can receive immediate feedback. The introduction of the new program allowed students to use positive points to purchase Amazon gift cards and incentive field trips. Additionally, during the 2017-2018 academic year, the school implemented the PASS Time program, Club time and continued with the monthly behavior incentive field trip.

During the 2018-2019 academic year, Block scheduling was introduced. Beginning with the second semester of the 2018-2019 academic year a paraprofessional was added to the staff, and this staff member addresses Tier II concerns (lagging skills). The project is ongoing and constantly developing.

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

The 2016-2017 academic year saw a graduation rate of 72.7%. The 2017-2018 academic year saw an increase of 27.3% to the graduation rate, bringing the graduation rate to 100%.

The attendance rate for the 2017-2018 academic year was 88%. From August 2018-February 2019, the attendance rate is at 92%.

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

The project did not require any special expertise or skills, just a drive to make a change and a willingness to build a relationship with students. If funding is available, a Behavior Specialist would be a great addition to the staff.

**Current Status of Project:**

The project is ongoing and continues to evolve to meet the needs of all students.

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

I have been fortunate to attend a National Alternative Education Association Conference, National Dropout Prevention Center At-Risk Forum, and the National Dropout Center Reaching the Wounded Student Conference. As an NDPS certification program participant, I returned from each of these conferences and held a professional development with colleagues. The presentations and collaborative meetings helped transform our school and culture.

For a single individual, it is difficult, if not impossible, to change the culture of a school by yourself. I would encourage everyone reading this project to reach out and talk about your hopes and dreams for the students. Develop relationships with students, families, community members, and the colleagues, and together it is possible to transform schools and communities.

**Lessons Learned:**

Staff members are not always willing to accept new ideas. However, there needs to be a willingness to try new things. A transformation is necessary beyond, “this is the way it has always been done.” Students need to have input into program ideas, and this supports student buy-in, and they learn skills they can utilize as a student’s transition from high school to colleges or careers. Do not adopt the mindset there is not money available, or budget cut-backs make an idea or project impossible. If educators take the time to conduct research, attend chamber meetings, there are community members, businesses, and non-profit organization willing to help.

**Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:**

My advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioner would be to involve community members and families in the project and do not become discouraged. Be willing to compromise and open to other people’s ideas because someone else may have a better idea. Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate, and be willing to refine the project until it is a working model, and be willing to adjust and make changes as new students enter the school.