

Building Relationships – Project S.M.I.L.E.

**Jackie L. Plude
Graduation Coach
Booker T. Washington High School
1111 Park Avenue
Norfolk, VA 23504**

757-628-3575

jplude@nps.k12.va.us

Key words: Building Relationships. School Climate, Professional Development

Funding Sources:

Booker T. Washington High School's 2019-2020 budget

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

This professional development initiative does not require separate funding.

Project Description:

Project S.M.I.L.E. is designed to assist teachers with building student relationships to improve overall attendance, academic performance and ultimately increase our graduation completion index (GCI).

Staffing Pattern:

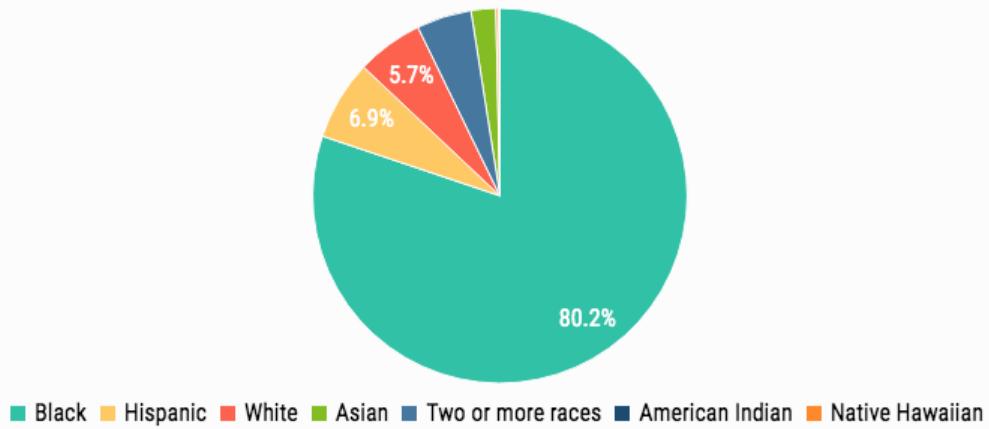
School Principal, School Assistant Principal, one School Counselor and one Graduation Coach

Population Served:

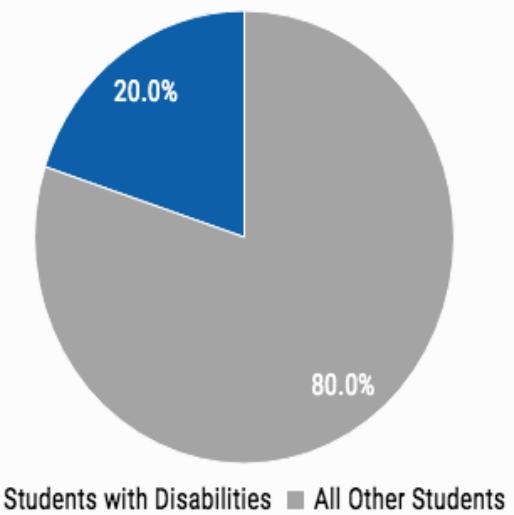
Booker T. Washington High School serves students in 9th through 12th grades. Students' ages range from 14 years old to 21 years old. Since the 2016-2017 school year, student population has decreased. During the 2016-2017 school year, there were 972 students enrolled. During the 2017-2018 school year, there were 931 students enrolled. Last year, the 2018-2019 school year, there were 887 students enrolled. Booker T. Washington High School is a Title 1 school, so all students receive free lunch.

Booker T Washington High School's Membership by subgroups:

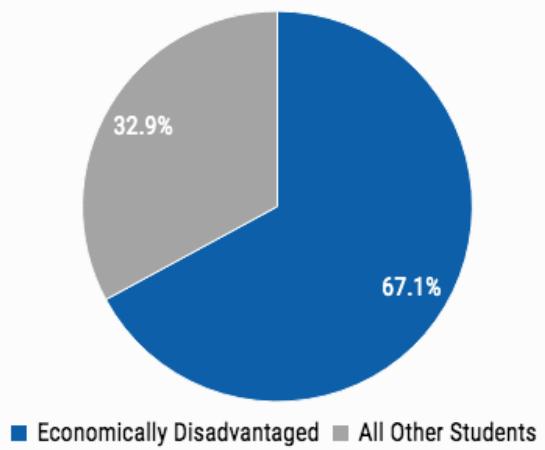
2018 Fall Membership By Subgroup: Racial and Ethnic Groups



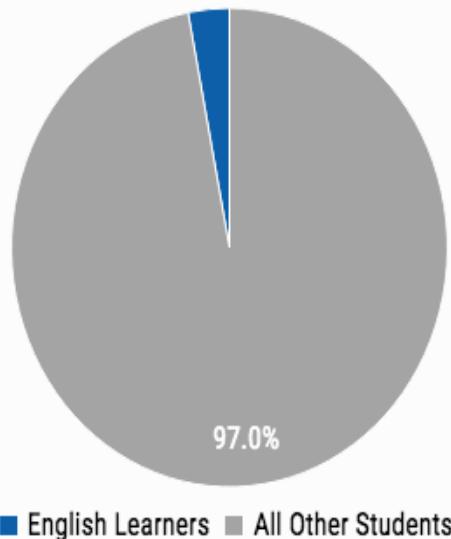
2018 Fall Membership By Subgroup: Students with Disabilities



2018 Fall Membership By Subgroup: Economically Disadvantaged



2018 Fall Membership By Subgroup: English Learners



Project Origination:

I will begin my fifth year as a graduation coach in September 2019 and have attended four At-Risk Conferences. Every year, there is a reoccurring theme that is so simple. Improving student attendance, academic performance and graduation completion can be dramatically affected by building strong teacher/student relationships. Building relationships with students promotes a positive learning environment, helps to build our classroom community, and is probably one of the best investments we can make with our students. And this very simple concept costs nothing! In the 2019-2020 school year, I want to improve the overall data report card through free professional development that will have the most powerful impact.

Issues Addressed:

- Poor Attendance
- Poor Academic Performance
- Discipline Concerns
- On Time Graduation
- Dropouts

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

- Improve attendance
- Improve academic performance
- Improve classroom management
- Improve GCI (Graduation Completion Index)

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

This project incorporates multiple strategies where teachers are highly supportive of students and have personal connections which will affect their instructional decision making and improve student attendance and performance.

Sometimes, the simplest gestures can have the most powerful impact. Standing at the door to the classroom, greeting students as they enter, and checking in on them sends a subtle yet important message: "You are cared for, you are safe, you are supported, you are respected, and you have a voice here." It is an unfortunate reality for many students that sometimes a teacher may be the only adult throughout the course of the day who takes the time to talk with them.

Successful teaching and learning experiences ultimately depend on basic human connections and basic human needs. Students and teachers need to feel connected, empowered, and successful. Effective educators are authentic. They know that many times, it is paying attention to the little things that will pay important relational dividends -- and this can mean the world to some students.

The importance of developing and sustaining a positive, welcoming school culture cannot be underestimated. The fundamental building block is relationships.

The best teachers know that, occasionally, it may be necessary to put aside a lesson and address concerns on the minds of their students. They remain observant of body language, facial expressions, and other non-verbal clues that may express more than what a student can orally articulate. In many instances, teachers believe in their students more than the students believe in themselves. And sometimes all it takes is a smile and a greeting to establish such a crucial foundation for growth and success.

Project S.M.I.L.E. is an acronym for:

- S – Stand at the door and greet students as they enter
- M – Make connections (*learn about their hobbies, interests, and passions*)
- I – Include everyone (every student feels welcome and missed in every classroom)
- L – Listen to students
- E – Encourage conversations (among teachers and peers)

Project S.M.I.L.E. will be introduced during the preservice week of the 2019-2020 school year. Ongoing staff development will occur throughout the year.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

The proposed professional development program has not yet been implemented. In June 2020, attendance data, GCI (Graduation Completion Index) and dropout percentage will be compared to last year. Student surveys will be administered at the beginning and end of the school year.

Project Timeline:

2019-2020 school year

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

Not available at this time.

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

- Ability to effectively conduct professional development sessions
- Ability to obtain researched practices on building relationships

Current Status of Project:

Currently, it is in the planning stage. Implementation will begin the preservice week of the 2019-2020 school year.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

My role and involvement with the project is complete organization and presentation of the project. I will work with the Principal, Assistant Principal, and a School Counselor to create professional development opportunities related to building relationships with students.

Lessons Learned:

This project has not yet been implemented, but I foresee some difficulty in getting **all** teachers on board with building positive student relationships. I know I will need to reiterate that building relationships with students promotes a positive learning environment, helps to build our classroom community, and is probably one of the best investments we can make with our students.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

Dropout prevention practitioners today must realize that one size does not fit all. Every school has a different school climate and the needs of students vary. We must be willing to seeking ways to improve student involvement and achievement. This means working and communicating with all who have an impact on a student: parents, teachers, staff, cafeteria employees, bus drivers, custodians, and administrations.

Helpful Links:

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/going-to-school-is-optional-schools-need-to-engage-students-to-increase-their-lifetime-opportunities/>

<https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/what-teens-want-their-schools>

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/students-desire-hear-teachers-lori-desautels>