

Bridging the Gap from Home School to Alternative School

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Funding Sources:

No additional funding needed

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

N/A

Project Description: This project is intended to assist students in the transition to and from the Alternative School. There are unfortunate times when a student's behavior results in a referral to the District Alternative School. The goal of this project is to find a better way of transiting the student to the Alternative School and back to the Homeschool. The three main problems this project focuses on is

- to ensure the student is not penalized academically
- bridge the gap between teachers and staff at the Alternative School and the Homeschool
- for the homeschool to maintain a relationship with the student.

Academics:

In the past when a student is referred for expulsion, there could be up to two weeks the student is not in school. The student will most likely be put on OSS immediately while awaiting a hearing. Once the hearing is complete, the student will wait on the results. If he/she has been referred to the Alternative School, the student has up to five days to register or respond. This means a student could be out of school for up to 2 weeks before starting the Alternative School. This also means the student has already missed up to two weeks of instruction. Teachers should not penalize the student for assignments not completed during this time. Instead, students should receive assignments virtually from teachers, or use an online platform (Edgenuity) to assign alternative assignments for the student to complete. This will ensure the opportunity for learning continues during the transition to the Alternative School.

Bridging the Gap:

Bridging the gap between homeschool teachers and the Alternative School is something that will require conversations with and support from Administration. Many times, when a student goes to the Alternative School, the homeschool teacher will receive an email about transferring a grade and the student is removed from his/her schedule. The student is then scheduled with teachers at the Alternative School. No communication between the teachers happens. Using the online platform, Edgenuity, the homeschool teacher is able to create a course for the student based on the teacher's knowledge of what the student has already had instruction on and what content is still needed. A virtual course is created specifically for that student and the Alternative School teachers are there to give additional instruction and support. Due to the limits on courses offered at the alternative school, in the past students have lost credits because the class is not offered at the Alternative School. Again, using Edgenuity, or any online platform the homeschool teacher prefers, the student can remain with the homeschool teacher virtually to complete the course and earn credit.

Maintaining Relationships:

Maintaining a relationship with the student may be the most important piece to this project. In the past, when a student was sent to the Alternative School, there was no communication from the Homeschool until it was time for the student to return. He/she would have seen a Administrator on the day of the hearing and would not see anyone from the Homeschool until the Exit meeting when it was time for the student to return to the Homeschool. During this project, a team from the Homeschool went to visit students at the Alternative School every two weeks. The Graduation Coach, a Counselor, and an Administrator were the team members. During the visits, the team discussed grades, discipline issues, and any issues that may have been going on. The team also meets with the Counselor and/or Administrator at the Alternative School to get an update on the Student's progress. The team from the Homeschool also keeps the student informed on any news from the home school. The goal is to make the student still feel as though they are a part of the Home School.

Staffing Pattern:

Graduation Coach at the home school, Assistant Administrator and School Counselor from both the home school and Alternative Education Services (AES).

Population Served:

Students who have been referred to the AES.

Project Origination:

Initially, this project was intended to show the importance of maintaining a relationship with students who were attending the Alternative Education Services program. As a result, the goal was for the students to still feel connected to their homeschool and maintain that relationship when the students return to the homeschool. That goal was accomplished with most students. However, during this process, additional needs were identified and the project naturally moved from one goal to more of a collaborative effort to make the best decisions for students. Below are some of the additional efforts happening due to this project:

- In the event that not all classes are offered at AES, home school teachers are more willing to work with students virtually to prevent the student from losing the credit.
- Some students are more successful in the learning environment at AES. Administrators, Counselors, and the parent/guardian will work together to make the best decision for the student about returning to the home school, or in some cases, Adult Education.
- Students still feel “connected” to their home school which leads to less anxiety about returning.

Issues Addressed:

Maintaining classes/credits required for graduation, maintaining a relationship with the homeschool, and ensuring the student is on the appropriate track for the most success.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

- Decrease in the number of students who are repeatedly referred to AES by offering additional support once returning to the homeschool
- Ensure students referred to AES do not suffer any academic losses due to discipline issues
- Develop individualized plans for the students moving forward to ensure on time graduation.

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:

Open communication between schools, bi-weekly meetings to discuss student progress, individualized plan to ensure the student does not lose any credits, home school teachers work with students to continue courses virtually when not available at AES.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

This success of the project has exceeded original expectations. If at all possible, students referred to the Alternative School did not lose credits due to the transfer. Homeschool teachers from all departments worked with students to customize instruction for the students, even CATE and Fine Arts classes. Many of the students who were part of this project have a history of discipline issues. Many times they have not had positive experiences with faculty and Administrators. The connections made while the students were at the alternative school were carried back to the homeschool. The Counselor, Graduation Coach, and/or Administrator who visited the student on a regular basis maintained that connection once the student returned. The team members became advocates for the student. The team will continue to work with the Alternative School to build on this project and develop procedures to better help students through the transition to and from the Alternative School.

Project Timeline:

Ongoing.

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

The above results detail some of the outcomes. Graduation rates will increase due to this project due to a more individualized plan for students.

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

Ability to be flexible, maintain open communication with all parties involved, and have willing stakeholders.

Current Status of Project:

Ongoing.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

Coordinator of the project and team leader.

Lessons Learned:

Making a connection and building a trusting relationship with a student does not happen overnight.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

Being consistent is so important. Show up when you say you will, follow up on attendance and grades, and maintain contact with their parent/guardian. Don't shy away from asking "Why not" if it's the best thing for a student. Always be an advocate for students.