Patton Power Hour!

Shayna Love, Lead Counselor
Districtwide Student Initiatives
Dallas ISD
smarkham@dallasisd.org

Key words: Goal Setting, Team Building, Social/Emotional Learning, Mentoring

Funding Sources:
During the 2016-2017 school year, the funding for Power Hour was provided as part of the state and federal funding allocated for the campus. Materials for activities were supplied from the campus budget. Awards and incentives were also provided from the general campus budget. Staff and mentoring training were provided at no cost by the Patton Student Services Department. Mentors from the community volunteered their time to engage with students.

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:
Initially, we had no budget for this project. Staff and community members donated supplies for the projects and provided snacks and drinks for the events. The second year of the endeavor, we budgeted $1000 for supplies and added this to the Student Services Department budget. This money was allocated for classroom supplies, paper and printing supplies for photos and posters. We also purchased inexpensive awards and incentives for students and printed certificates for them.

Project Description:
The entire student body and staff of Patton Academic Center participated in Power Hour. Approximately 25 community volunteers from various businesses and organizations also participated. Students were assigned to small groups; 10 to 20 per group, along with two staff and/or community members. Students met with the same group all year.

Power Hour was held weekly on Friday mornings for one hour throughout the school year.

Staffing Pattern:
Patton's Student Services Department took the lead on the planning, training and organization for Power Hour. The team members worked together to create lessons for the teachers and mentors to facilitate with their groups. They also organized all needed materials for each lesson.

This department consisted of the following personnel:
- Shayna Love, Lead Counselor
- Dr. Mary Elliott, Counselor
- Lakeithsa Buckley, Campus Instructional Coach
- Yvonne McDaniel, Attendance Clerk
- Guadalupe Arvizo, Social Worker
- Leslie Swann, Principal

Population Served:
Our campus consisted of approximately 250 students in grades 9 - 12 from all Dallas ISD comprehensive high schools. These students attend our accelerated campus because they were overage and under-credited. Students chose to attend Patton so they could catch up and attempt to graduate faster than if they remained at their home campus. We provided flexible scheduling and all-inclusive social support services. Students were between the ages of 17 and 20. Many of our students were employed, some were homeless, and some were parents

themselves. Our campus demographics consisted of 48% African American and 52% Hispanic students. All campus staff members, regardless of position or role, participated in Power Hour. This included 43 staff members.

Project Origination:
I proposed adding Power Hour to our weekly schedule based on a program we used with students at my former high school, Flower Mound Marcus. Our program at Marcus was called C.H.I.L.L.: Character Helps Individuals Live and Learn. At Patton, we revised the over-all focus of the program to establish strong and supportive relationships between students and staff and to create a sense of unity and culture on our campus.

Issues Addressed:
The majority of our students had experienced attendance issues and poor performance on standardized assessments, resulting in them being behind in credits. Many of our students had not developed positive relationships with teachers and staff members. We wanted students to engage in activities with staff that would initiate conversations, help discover common ground, and demonstrate that we are all a team working together to reach graduation. Another issue we hoped to address was goal-setting and realizing what it takes to be a successful student. Students were assisted with monitoring their own progress in their classes by keeping a record of their short- and long-term goals, attendance, grades and referrals.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:
Our primary objective was to establish a culture of belonging and trust between students and staff members. We also desired to involve the community in supporting our students while providing opportunities for students to become involved in community and neighborhood activities. Since our students came from all high schools across Dallas, transitioning to a new school and neighborhood proved to be a daunting task for some students.

Another purpose we hoped to achieve was to empower our students to take charge of their own education and academic success. By realizing they had staff and community support, students learned to set both short- and long-term goals and analyze their progress toward these goals. Students self-evaluated their progress by keeping records of their status and relating their choices to their level of success. Mentors and staff members assisted students by discussing these topics weekly with them and made suggestions on how to improve in certain areas. A strong emphasis was placed on encouraging and awarding any progress. Our main intention was to create a sense of belonging and awareness of commonality in order for students to feel supported and empowered.

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:
Our weekly Power Hour sessions utilized the following strategies in order to accomplish our objectives:

- *Community Involvement* - to establish partnerships with neighborhood organizations

- *Case Management and Student Support* - topics discussed and addressed through experiential activities to improve academic performance and classroom behavior while developing social skills and self-awareness.

- *Mentoring* - Established relationships between students and staff

- *Academic Advisement* - Students learned about graduation requirements, how to track their grades, develop study habits, manage their time, set goals and steps to accomplish their goals.

- *Celebrations* - Empowered students developed more self-confidence and became more engaged learners. Students began to help each other.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):
During our first year, we had some challenges with a few staff members who did not support the program and did not get their groups involved as they should have. As a result, some students did not benefit from the activities and competitions or awards given. Students who returned evaluations stated that the weekly progress monitoring of their academic and social successes helped them identify areas of growth and realize their strengths. Students also enjoyed becoming more familiar with staff members as "people" and not teachers. One major achievement we accomplished was to reward students for their progress and empower them to succeed. We also ended the year with a sense of bonding and belonging across our campus.

Project Timeline:
We began meeting in September and met weekly until the end of the school year. We have continued this program each year. Each August we review the results of the prior year and amend our plan accordingly.

Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:
By encouraging students to begin with the end in mind (graduation) and to develop and set measurable goals, we increased our graduation rate and lowered our dropout rate. Students felt more comfortable discussing challenges and issues with staff members. Students supported each other more and gained self-awareness and self-confidence. Since we are the only alternative campus of choice for DISD, we have a constant influx of students throughout the year. Welcoming them to Patton and helping them feel comfortable with their peers allows students to want to come to class and do their best.

Special Conditions, Expertise, and/or Skills Required to Carry Out Project:
Community collaboration and faculty and staff support and buy-in are essential to the success of the Power Hour program. Enthusiasm and positive attitudes are needed by all involved so that students become invested in the program and put their efforts toward being successful in school - both academically and socially. The administrative team must be willing to address issues that arise with scheduling and planning. All facilitators are trained by the Student Services Department personnel. This training included academic

requirements for graduation, social/emotional learning skills and activities and assisting with record keeping.

Current Status of Project:
We continue to meet in Power Hour groups, but we have transitioned the groups to meet as part of their advisory classes and not in separate groups. This allows students to change groups quarterly and have the opportunity to become acquainted with more staff and students. We also meet bi-weekly now. We have added a component on standardized testing as well.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:
 I proposed this venture to my administrative team and led the organization and planning. My department members and student council members were asked to contribute ideas and topics for our sessions. As the Lead Counselor, I trained the staff on graduation requirements so they would be knowledgeable in goal-setting and timelines for completing graduation requirements. It is extremely important that each student know their status and projected graduation date.

Lessons Learned:
I was quickly reminded that even the best laid plans can veer off-course. I have learned to be flexible in scheduling - sometimes we could not meet on Fridays. Some staff members will not be supportive of the idea and may need more encouragement to get involved. Not all students will see the purpose of the activities so a peer mentor may be assigned to assist them. Clear communication, advance planning and proper training of all parties helped us overcome these challenges

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:
Meet with your administrative team to see if you can afford the time in your daily/weekly Schedule. Also have your goals and outcomes for the project outlined and supported by data before you meet with them. Be happy for even a monthly time slot at first; starting small is better than not starting at all. Also, explain the idea to your student leaders and even some of your struggling students. Get their opinions for topics and activities - things they feel will be beneficial to your campus.