

**Know Your Numbers  
Promoting Graduation through Self-Awareness**

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**Funding Sources:**

All funding for this project has been provided by the School District of Palm Beach County (SDPBC).

**Project Cost and Budget Narrative:**

This program was implemented with no budgetary requirements, outside of the normal General/Instructional funding allocations. A paradigm shift was needed amongst the teachers and students which reflected a belief that completing the graduation requirements can be attained regardless of the student's individual academic deficiencies.

**Project Description:**

The "Know Your Numbers" program was implemented in four Alternative Education settings for all grade levels, with a focus on graduating seniors. Two of these sites catered to students placed due to behavior infractions. A third site enrolled at-risk students who were over-aged, held low GPAs and had significant credit deficiencies. The fourth site's enrollment included students placed for behavior infractions, and over-aged, low GPA and credit deficient students.

**Staffing Pattern:**

All of the instructional staff assigned to the Alternative Education Centers hold Florida Professional Educator Certifications in the areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. Elective and Vocational instructors hold either local or state certifications in their areas of expertise.

**Population Served:**

School	Total Enrollment	Grades Served	% Black	% Hispanic	Selection Criteria
1	138 (A)	12	75%	15%	Active Enrollment between 2019 - 2020
2	65 (B)	12	68%	22%	Active Enrollment between 2019 - 2020
3	65 (B)	12	62%	28%	Active Enrollment between 2019 - 2020
4	153 (AB)	12	71%	25%	Active Enrollment between 2019 - 2020
A - Academic Setting					
B - Behavioral Setting					
AB - Academic and Behavioral Setting					

**Project Origination:**

While supporting the Alternative Education secondary schools with their students' individual assessment results, William "Jeff" Pollard (Manager, Support Services Department) noticed many of the students were close to achieving proficiency in Reading and Mathematics. A matrix was created that showed the students' most recent scores on the Florida Assessment Standards (FSA) compared with the proficiency standards required at each grade level. This comparison revealed the number of points that each student needed to earn a proficient score. In most cases, the gains required to show a year's growth and/or reach proficiency were obscured by the students' age, low GPA and credit deficiencies. Consequently, for most of these students, their credit and GPA deficiencies manifested in inappropriate behavior and low self-esteem, resulting in their placement in Alternative Education settings. When the students' individualized assessment data was presented to the Alternative Education Centers and their instructional staff, an immediate campaign was initiated to inform the students of their standing on the achievement spectrum, and motivational strategies were adopted to help the students improve their self-esteem and change their behavior.

**Issues Addressed:**

The primary issues that needed to be addressed were the students' ability to improve their below-proficient test scores, increase their GPA and earn the credits required for Florida's standard diploma.

**Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:**

The overarching objective of the "Know Your Numbers" initiative was to increase the graduation rate by 10% each year.

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

- Provide students with prompt feedback on their assessment results.
- Provide teachers with pacing calendars that encompassed all standards.
- Provide remediation on all standards measured below proficiency.
- Provide continuous qualitative/quantitative data chats with the students.
- Use informal assessments to measure students grasp of lesson contents.
- Use Bell ringers and Exit tickets to remediate standards.
- Stay on pace to ensure the students are introduced to all the standards.

**Results (Outcomes and Achievements):**

**Graduation rates for FY19 – FY20 are shown in the summary below.**

School	# of Seniors	FY19	FY20	FY21	1 Year Change	3 Year Change
A	48	51%	71%	64%	-7%	13%
B	6	NR	39%	0%	-	NR
B	7	15%	25%	31%	6%	16%
AB	47	58%	43%	82%	39%	24%

**Project Timeline:**

The project was started during the Spring Semester of 2019 and continues through the present.

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

In FY20, Academic (A) site showed a significant increase in their graduation rate from 51% to 71%; however, this gain was lost between FY20 and F21, with a decrease of -6.5 %, primarily due to the impact that Covid had and the resulting implementation of remote learning. The urban setting of site (A) may have also played a role in students' responses to remote learning. Both the Behavior (B) sites are also located in urban settings and their twelfth grade populations were less than ten during the observation period making it difficult for any meaningful statistical analysis. The Academic/Behavior (AB) site, located in a rural area, showed the greatest response to the "Know Your Numbers" project. Between FY20 and FY21, (AB) site produced a 39% increase in their graduation rate.

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

- Teachers were provided Professional Development (PD) in School-Wide Positive Behavior Support.
- Master Schedules reflected opportunities for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math remediation.
- Students' ELA and Math achievements were monitored using formative assessments.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLC) met weekly to review student progress and plan interventions.
- Reading and Math Coaches were hired to provide teacher support.

**Current Status of Project:**

The "Know Your Numbers" project continues to be enthusiastically promoted at the AB site. It should be noted that as part of their ongoing strategy, the academic and behavior students were not segregated. Consequently, the overall incidence of behavior infractions decreased, and the students overall academic performance increased as reflected by a 98% participation rate on the 2020-2021 Florida Standards Assessments.

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

As a NDPS certification participant, I provided the alternative education sites with the assessment data and the framework for establishing the "Know Your Numbers" program. I created the data reports used by the teachers, created the progress monitoring forms and guided the Reading and Math coaches in their support activities. Additionally, I met with the site principals quarterly to review their formative and diagnostic data, simplifying their interpretation and analysis of the data. By moderating quarterly Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T.) analyses, I assisted in the creation of action plans aimed at improving the delivery of instruction, increasing the student's academic performance and ultimately increasing their graduation rate.

**Lessons Learned:**

- Principals/administrators required training in how to monitor the students' academic progress and how to effectively collaborate with the PLCs in planning remediation.

- Both the administrators and teachers lacked the ability to analyze data in a meaningful way, i.e., how the data could be used to reveal gaps in the students learning.
- Professional development was required to implement collaborative Professional Learning Communities.
- Several teachers wanted to use lessons from previous years which did not reflect the standards present on the state assessments.
- Standard classroom board configurations were implemented to ensure that the students clearly understood the standards that were being taught and assessed.
- Teachers were introduced to higher order thinking strategies, i.e., how to record knowledge, how to form hypothesis, etc., in order to increase rigor in the delivery of their lessons.
- School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports was used to guide both the students and teachers in a paradigm shift which reflected a greater confidence in the students' ability to achieve.

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

There are no short cuts to teaching and learning the basic skills. The student's involvement in their individual learning is a crucial part of achieving academic success. Students must know and understand the academic standards that they are being taught. They must be provided immediate feedback on their performance, and provided the resources to remediate their deficiencies. A school center's academic objectives must include completing a high school diploma, as well as a clear vision of post-secondary opportunities. The reading and math skills required to compete and complete academic and/or vocational post-secondary programs must be mastered by our students. Finally, the administrators and teachers in our alternative education centers have the responsibility of not only teaching the academic standards, but also providing students with the confidence and self-esteem required for their continued growth and development at the next level.