

## **Post-Secondary College and Career Readiness**

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***Key words:*** Dropout Prevention, college and career readiness, postsecondary readiness, ICAP, graduation rates

**Funding Sources:**

Colorado Department of Education provided Harrison School District with a three-year grant to fund the addition of two College and Career Counselors at participating high schools. Additional funding was received from the state that allowed us to host college and career visits for students.

**Project Cost and Budget Narrative:**

The initial grant was for \$300,000. The funding received allowed for us to hire two high school counselors who would implement and maintain a college and career readiness counseling program. Their main focus is on increasing the graduation rate and preparing students for post-secondary and career options.

**Project Description:**

In the 2019-2021 Culture and Climate survey given by HSD2, we learned that 46% of students had neutral or negative responses to the following question: I have a clear plan after graduation. Only 62% felt they had access to college and career readiness resources. One of the goals of the grant was to improve student plans for after high school and better equip our students with information for college/career readiness and strengthen student belief that college/career is viable

The goal of this project is to increase student graduation rates by implementing the ICAP and college visits to expose students to different career paths.

**Staffing Pattern:**

Along with the district head counselor the two high schools both schools had to have the following personnel on the team:

- District Lead Counselor
- One administrator from each of the district's two high schools
- One counselor from each of the district's two high schools
- Content Teacher from each of the district's two high schools

**Population Served:**

Harrison School District 2 has two high schools that participated in this grant. HSD2 high schools enroll students grades 9-12 with 1,108 students enrolled in HHS and 915 students enrolled in SHS. Much of the student population consist of minorities 79% at HHS ND 83% at SHS. The Free and Reduced Lunch population is approx. 80% at both schools.

The target students for this project are the class of 2025 however all grade levels were able to participate in events that were hosted by this project.

**Project Origination:**

Harrison School District 2 received a grant to help improve graduation rates for the class of 2025 by exposing students to different college and career paths through various events. The grant aims to host various college and career events that expose students to different college and career pathways in hopes of decreasing dropout rates.

**Issues Addressed:**

- This project addresses dropout rates, raising graduation rates, and exposing students to post-secondary options.
- Many HSD2 students must work to support their families. This project will explore opportunities to secure better employment options for students.
- A needs assessment was conducted to identify our underlying issues and determine the nature of our needs as well as their causes. We used the needs assessment to prioritize our action steps to fill any identified gaps.

**Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:**

- The SCCG grant will help improve our college and career readiness programming to decrease our dropout rate, increase our graduation rate, and empower more first-generation college students to seek higher education. This will be measured by the number of students who stated they're interested in postsecondary options that have increased after attending one or more of the postsecondary events.
- By May 2025, HSD2 will increase the graduation rates for HSD2 males by 3%.
- By May 2025, HSD2 will increase the HSD2 post-secondary placements by 8% as measured by the National Student Clearinghouse.
- By May 2025, HSD2 will reduce our dropout rate by 0.2%.
- By May 2025, the combined graduation rate for both high schools will be 80%.

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

- The newly hired counselors, along with the Dropout Prevention Specialist, will be a part of the Early Warning System (EWS) that will provide interventions to improve the dropout rates, such as mentorship, PBIS strategies, and parent engagement plans.
- Expand the capacity of managing internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning for credit toward graduation.
- Created a College/Career Committee whose goal is collaboratively planning with school administration to host FAFSA workshops, host scholarship and essay writing workshops, integrate multiple pathways college/career, and develop and implement ICAP standards and benchmarks 9-12.
- All students will participate in the Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) to help them identify postsecondary options.

**Results (Outcomes and Achievements):**

- Students were able to visit college campus and postsecondary career options to explore the options available to them,
- In total, 95 different students attended, and all groups had rave reviews from admissions counselors/tour guides.

College Visit 1	55 students attended, 37 students said they are now more interested in applying/attending
College Visit 2	55 students attended, 37 students said they are now more interested in applying/attending
College Visit 3	47 students attended, 32 students said they are now more interested in applying/attending

College Visit 4	14 total students attended, 12 students said they are now more interested in applying/attending
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**Project Timeline:**

The project started in August 2021 and will run through May 2025.

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

Through the identification of post-secondary plans students would be less likely to dropout as they work to create a post-secondary plan using Individual Career and Academic Plans.

Students were able to identify post-secondary plans after the completion of their high school years.

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

- Needed to hire two college and career counselors to assist students as they completed the ICAP and to plan college and career events.
- All teachers were trained to use the new ICAP platform to support students as they worked through college and career modules in the ICAP platform Xello.
- A teacher served as the coordinated the monthly college and career visits.

**Current Status of Project:**

The project started in the fall of 2022. The first year was dedicated to planning and implementing the ICAP scope and sequence and planning college and career sites.

At the start of the 2022-2023 school year, we started with the ICAP scope and sequence using the platform Xello. All grade levels are creating their individualized career plans with specific grade-level important tasks.

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

In this project, I worked with other members of the grant on the planning and implementation stages. I assisted in the creation and expenditure of the school-based budget. I oversaw the planning of college and career site-based visits. I assisted with the planning of family information nights as well as secured guest speakers in various fields. My role has now evolved into an advisory role where other team members have taken on the day-to-day tasks.

**Lessons Learned:**

Exposing students to college and career opportunities is the first step in reducing the dropout rate. Many of our students had never been outside of their local neighborhood, and we found that simple exposure to college and career opportunities broadened the view of many of our students. Allowing students to visit local colleges allowed students to see themselves as future college student. We also found that exposing students to other career paths that didn't directly involve college sparked interest in students who were not college bound. This project aims to reduce dropout rates by exposing students to different college and career paths they may not have known of.

Although the targeted graduation class is the class of 2025, we have allowed students from all graduating classes to participate in the site visits, and we have seen an increase in the number of students selecting a college or career prior to the end of their senior year. These students now

have the opportunity to select classes that will help prepare them for their post-secondary career path while still in high school.

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

Providing students with exposure to post-secondary options is the best lesson we can offer today's students. We found that providing these college and career site-based visits for kids was more impactful than any speaker we could bring into the school. Students having the opportunity to see themselves in a career opened the eyes of so many of our students.