Graduation Mentoring- Relationship Based Interventions
Multiple Paths to the Diploma
Monitoring for Interventions and Success

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Funding Sources:
The Graduation Specialist and Graduation Mentor positions are funded through Title IV funds within the SPS budget.

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

- The budget included 1.0 FTE Graduation Specialist paid at the rate of teacher's pay scale plus 20 days for an annual salary of a maximum of $70, 960.00 plus benefits.

- Also, there are three .4 FTE Graduation Mentors allotted a maximum total of $78, 292.50 over three positions.

- The total budget for the Graduation Intervention Program was $149, 252.50.

Project Description:
August 2019- The Graduation Mentoring program is one that seeks to mediate the social and emotional needs of students through relationship building while also seeking out the best path academically towards graduation for at-risk seniors. The program utilizes three part-time Graduation Mentors and one full-time district Graduation Specialist position. The Specialist will meet regularly with the mentors to discuss their progress and monitoring within their buildings, to identify challenges, and to celebrate successes. The Graduation Mentors meet with a list of identified at-risk credit deficient students within their building and discuss personal aspects and needs, goals, and academic needs. They discuss the best plan towards completing a diploma including using Credit Recovery courses, Credit Acquisition courses, Online/Blended learning opportunities, Alternative Placement, Alternative Scheduling, and/or the Missouri Options Program. The mentors continue to monitor attendance and progress and follow-up regularly with students as well as communicating with administrators and teachers about students and needs. When a specific need is identified, the mentors work to coordinate access to resources available in the buildings, district, and/or community. The Specialist works with buildings and mentors to track the progress of students, their credits, and graduation plans as well as maintains data to ensure accountability is accessing clean and true data. The Specialist also works with the Analytics, Assessment, and Accountability department to monitor data regarding graduation rate, dropouts, end of course test completion and college/career readiness test completion. The graduation specialist presents data and reviews monitoring efforts with building and district level administrators at a minimum of once a month for the first semester. These meetings progress to become biweekly and weekly during the second semester as graduation approaches.

Staffing Pattern:
Out of the five high schools in the district, the three with the highest dropout rates and lowest on-time graduation rates were staffed with a part-time (15hr/week) Graduation Mentor who is a certified experienced educator. These mentors have experience with at-risk students, previous special education and administrative experience, and experience with diverse populations. The district has one full-time Graduation Specialist who is an experienced educator, has certification in K-12 administration, and has advanced degrees in

Educational Leadership.

Leadership: Executive Director of Secondary Learning- Dr. Shane Dublin—Replaced by Dr.
        Ron Woodard Fall 2020
        Director of Secondary Learning- Dr. Sheila Wynn
        Graduation Specialist- Pamela Foster Ed.S.
        Graduation Mentor- Kim Nye
        Graduation Mentor- Linda Jones
        Graduation Mentor- Kelly Hugenot

Population Served:
By the Graduation Mentors: Approximately 300 students within three different buildings all in
12th grade.
By the Graduation Specialist: All 4th-7th year seniors were monitored for all five high schools, as
well as some 9th-11th grade monitoring.

Springfield Public Schools enrollment for the 2018-2019 school year included 7,397 students 9th-
12th grades between five high schools and one alternative school with 8.21% qualifying for
special education services and 2.68% qualifying for English Language Learning services.
Additionally, 45.01% received reduced or free lunch.

Springfield Public Schools enrollment for the 2019-2020 school year included 7,627 students 9th-
12th grades between five high schools and one alternative school with 9.21% qualifying for
special education services and 3.00% qualifying for English Language Learning services.
Additionally, 44.87% receive reduced or free lunch.

Project Origination:
In 2018, Springfield Public Schools recognized a significant drop in the on-time graduation
rate and an increase in student inactivity and dropouts. In response to this a task force met
and analyzed the shortfalls in the schools most at-risk. A pilot program began in January
2019 with the implementation of a trial that included three part-time Graduation Mentors
and one part-time Graduation Specialist. The goal of the Graduation Specialist was to aid in
the statistical accountability piece of monitoring dropouts and students at-risk for not
graduating on time. Also, the position works with the Accountability department to identify
data problems and to clean up data to report out the truest data most accurately for each
building. The Graduation Mentors were assigned a list of students who were credit deficient
going into their second semester of their senior year and were tasked with meeting with the
students, forming relationships, looking at their transcripts and grades and suggesting
potential alternative pathways to graduation including using Credit Recovery Programs,
Credit Acquisition Programs, schedule altering, using Online/Blended courses, and using the
Missouri Options Program. Also, the specialist and mentors were tasked with attempting to
re-engage inactive and dropped students to enroll them in an alternative path to completing
their diploma on-time.

Issues Addressed:
The issues addressed through this project include identifying credit deficient seniors early,
intervening with credit deficient students sooner, the need to mediate needs/resources to allow

students to be able to more adequately engage academically, build relationships with at-risk students to help offer alternative pathways to graduation when needed.

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:
Desired outcomes include an increased on-time (4 year) graduation rate, a reduced inactive/dropout rate, and an increased attendance rate.

Strategies and/or Interventions of the Project:
Graduation Mentors were provided with a tracker of students in a tiered division, identifying those who are severely credit deficient going into their senior year and will require alternative plans to graduate on-time. A middle level of tiered students was identified as at-risk and needing continual monitoring and potential interventions with alternative graduation options. The first tier included those who were on-target to graduate on-time; however, their grades would need to be checked each quarter to ensure they were not failing any graduation required courses. Each mentor works 15 hours a week and is given autonomy with how they choose to align their invention schedules based on student attendance and building need. Data trackers were maintained for all five high schools that were updated biweekly including completion of state standardized test requirements, CCR testing requirements, credits, programs, and notes regarding interventions. A separate tracker was maintained biweekly to maintain a record of all inactive/dropped students from 2014-2020. These trackers were shared with building and district administrators as well as the mentors. A database of resources at the building, district, and community level was provided to the mentors to be able to offer to students as needed. Knowledge of the state requirements for graduation is essential to allow for the opportunity to employ an Individual Plan of Study for at-risk students to be able to potentially graduate with the state minimum required credits. Knowing the entrance and completion requirements for the Missouri Options Program is essential to be able to best guide students who would be successful through this path towards graduation. It is pertinent to know and be familiar with the district graduation requirements and credit disbursement requirements.

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):
With the intervention of a part-time graduation mentor focused program, the 2019 graduation rate increased by 2.6% for the district. The three schools that provided a Graduation Mentor saw increases of 6.5%, 5.2%, and 0.8% in their graduation rate.

2018-2019 School Year Graduation Rate

School	Total Cohort	Grads	Drops	Retained	2018-2019 Grad Rate	2017-2018 Grad Rate	Difference
Central	*408*	*346*	*41*	*21*	**84.8%**	*78.3%*	*+6.5%*
Glendale	382	345	24	13	**90.3%**	91.6%	-1.3%
Hillcrest	*271*	*212*	*46*	*11*	**78.2%**	*73.0%*	*+5.2%*
Kickapoo	457	443	5	9	**96.9%**	95.1%	+1.8%
Parkview	*334*	*291*	*34*	*9*	**87.1%**	*86.3%*	*+0.8%*
District	**1852**	**1637**	**150**	**63**	**88.4%**	**85.8%**	**+2.6%**

Italicized schools were provided a part-time graduation mentor for the second semester during the 2018-2019 school year.

2019-2020 School Year Graduation Rate

School	Total Cohort	Grads	Drops	Retained	2019-2020 Grad Rate	2018-2019 Grad Rate	Difference
Central	*364*	*339*	*14*	*11*	*93.13%*	*84.80%*	*+8.33%*
Glendale	343	331	10	2	96.50%	90.30%	+6.20%
Hillcrest	*277*	*259*	*7*	*11*	*93.50%*	*78.20%*	*+15.30%*
Kickapoo	458	444	7	7	96.54%	96.90%	-0.36%
Parkview	*361*	*321*	*30*	*10*	*88.92%*	*87.00%*	*+1.92%*
District	**1803**	**1694**	**68**	**41**	**93.95%**	**88.40%**	**+5.55%**

Italicized schools were provided a part-time graduation mentor for second semester during the 2019-2020 school year.

Project Timeline:
A pilot was conducted second semester of the 2018-2019 school year implementing the newly developed positions of Graduation Mentors and a Graduation Specialist after a semester long study of the graduation rate problems through a Dropout Taskforce that was created with building administrators, district administrators, and Accountability personnel. The full project commenced in August 2019. This project will be continual and on-going with regular meetings throughout the school year to monitor effectiveness and to address barriers, as well as over the summer to begin the identification process and re-engagement efforts for the fall.

Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:
The desired outcomes include increasing on-time graduation rates, increasing student attendance, increasing interventions prior to students choosing to dropout, increasing re-engagement efforts for students who have dropped out/became inactive, and reducing the number of students who dropout or fall inactive.

Special Conditions, Expertise, and/or Skills Required to Carry Out Project:
- Data collection, transcribing, and analysis skills are essential to be able to evaluate the data metrics to ensure data is clean and make necessary recommendations to adjust/fix any data that is not correctly reported. Also, it is essential to continually provide building leaders and mentors with updated data concerning the students who are at-risk for not completing their diploma within four years, and/or becoming inactive/dropping out.
- Collaboration is essential as this project and position requires continual and transparent communication with district and building level administrators, counselors, mentors, teachers, and stakeholders.
- Lead and facilitate meetings to keep communication pathways open, keep a cohesive buy-in by all involved, and to mediate through any identified barriers.

Current Status of Project:
This project is continual and on-going with regular meetings to evaluate effectiveness and make adjustments as needed.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:
As an NDPS certification program participant, my role was to supervise the Graduation Mentors, meet regularly with district and building level administrators to discuss barriers, data, and make plans to meet student needs. I was responsible for first semester quarterly predictions of graduation rate, to monitor the students for each building who were coded as inactive and/or dropped. I also monitor all data for the buildings, and report weekly to district and buildings about graduation rate projections throughout second semester. I attempt to re-engage inactive/dropped students through outreach using phone calls, social media, email, home visits, and texting.

Lessons Learned:
Some of the lessons learned through this project are that relationships are a cornerstone in

dropout prevention. Having the ability to meet students' needs, to enable them to better engage in academics and/or choose a better pathway to graduation that fits their needs is essential. Having clean data is crucial. It is important for all buildings to audit their data input and ensure no errors in input have occurred, so reporting can be done accurately. Early intervention is best. Previously interventions were made with the mentors only in the second semester of their senior year. Having the ability to meet with, monitor, and mentor students starting in the beginning of the senior year helped to adjust plans and schedules as needed as well as meeting students' needs to avoid them choosing to dropout. Having alternative pathways to the diploma was essential for SPS to be able to meet the needs academically and socially/emotionally for those who are extremely credit deficient going into their senior year. Regular meetings were essential to discuss barriers that were present and to make plans to remove internal barriers keeping students from being successful. Having alternative pathways does not mean that those students do not continue to need the intervention and relationship with the mentor. Utilizing teachers to mentor those who are on the edge of falling to being at-risk is key to build universal buy-in within the building and aiding in developing the diploma driven culture. Transparent communication is pertinent between all leadership and those involved with monitoring student progress to eliminate any confusion and misinformation.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:
Advice for dropout prevention practitioners includes understanding the importance of relationships in connecting with at-risk students to intervene before they choose to dropout. Students need to feel connected and to feel like they belong. They need to feel like we as educators are invested in them and that they matter. They need to have their essential needs met. It is also especially important to ensure all data put into the system is clean and accurate to ensure that all information on a student is most current and up to date to allow for targeted interventions based on their needs and early interventions of schools do their ability to properly monitor progress. The greater the buy-in of all involved, leaders, teachers, counselors, mentors, administrators, etc the better the results. Graduation rate and dropout prevention is not one person's problem, it takes the efforts of all collectively to meet the students' needs to best advocate for them to find the best and most successful path to on-time graduation through appropriate and continued encouragement and support.