

Ninth Grade Transition Academy

Clip 3 – How an innovative scholarship program helped motivate high school students

Becky Harrison: As I said earlier, we have been doing our 9th grade program for about 10 years now. And in the first year we had those that were skeptical that this was where we needed to go and that a better product would be going to the 10th grade. But, the data from the first year showed dramatic improvement in attendance, failure rates, and in the spring the freshmen outscored the rest of the campus on the State test. So that was kind of a moot issue after that. That second year during the fall semester, what we began to hear and see from sophomore teachers was how much better a product was coming to them, that the student was coming with stronger skills. They were doing their homework, they were coming to class with their books, they were coming to tutorials asking for extra help. So they immediately began to see a better product coming to them and we have consistently seen that in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grade, to the point where last year the sophomore teachers began to say, we want to do a lot of the same things that the 9th grade's doing, we want to modify teaming. And all four grades now say, we want to academic interventions, we want to do credit recovery.

So what we're doing this year is looping the assistant principal and counselor from the 9th grade so that they are staying with students for two years. They get them as 9th graders, they will stay with them through the sophomore class and they'd go back and pick up another group of freshmen. Then what we're doing with the teaming, because it's

a little harder to have two classes, two grade levels with common planning times in the master schedule, we have grouped English and social studies and math and science with common kids, and then those teachers we're meeting with before and after school to do some teaming, kind of broad teaming because they have the same kids. And so we're doing a modified 9th grade program with teaming, academic interventions, credit recovery on the 10th grade level.

We're now doing a transition to college because we were fortunate enough about 8 years ago to be able to work with a nonprofit organization in town and develop a scholarship program where every student at Caprock High School has four years of college paid for – books, fees, and tuition. I worked with a nonprofit organization and we put together a program where they set aside a large amount of money just for Caprock kids to go to college. The guidelines are the student has to maintain an 80 overall average over the four years and an overall 95% attendance. And if they do that, they have four years of college, about \$150,000 a kid, to go to the local junior college and the local four-year college paid for. That has, along with the freshman program where the expectations were raised and kids were meeting with more success, the A Scholarship was kind of the icing on the cake because you've now said to kids, there is life after high school, you do have the ability to go on. It pays for two-year programs, it pays for certification, or it pays for a four-year college degree.

So our students now have a life after high school and that has changed the whole culture of the school also. Between the raising of our expectation and the fact that they have money to pursue once they graduate, it's a whole different culture. I used to hear

kids say, well you know, if I could go to college I would want to be a marine biologist, or whatever. Now I never hear that phrase from a kid. What I hear from students is, I'm going to college and I'm going to be a computer tech; or, I'm going to be. Because they know they have that future. And we monitor that very closely to make sure that they stay successful and that they stay what we call ACE Eligible, and that's meeting the 80 average and the 95% attendance. Last year's graduating class, 75% of the class had four years of college paid for. And so we're seeing such success and we're seeing the number of students who are taking harder courses, who are trying to get more math, more science, because they're meeting with success.

“The opinions expressed in this podcast by [the staff of] the Florida Department of Education [students, parents and teachers,] are not necessarily the opinions of Educational Testing Service.”