



Promising Practices Manual High School Graduation Coaches Fall 2007

Table of Contents

Community Partnerships	2
Graduation Teams	3
Helpful Hints and Tips	4
Incentive Programs	5
Mentoring	6
Student Motivation	6
Transition Programs	7
Appendix	9

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

My community coach, Jan Hackett, Chamber Director, has given me about 200 t-shirts to use as incentive and prizes. She and I are also working together with other community people to offer a program called Vision Quest to our juniors. Vision Quest is an eight week program designed to foster leadership and entrepreneurial skills. Students learn about the community, develop presentation skills, and then work in small groups with business mentors to develop a business plan. The business plans are presented to a panel of bankers for potential "funding," and a winner is selected. This program is patterned after the Leadership program sponsored by the Fanning Center at UGA. This is our 2nd year of sponsoring the program. Last year's students loved it and encouraged the juniors this year to apply. We have 18 students registered to begin the program this Saturday with an all day team building activity at Eagle Ranch in Tennessee.

Jill E. Key

Fannin County High School
JKey@fannin.k12.ga.us

Catoosa County has partnered with Northwestern Technical College and started an "Early College" program for at risk students. The students began at Northwestern on July 9th—they are taking their high school classes on Odyssey Ware and then taking college courses (that will count for high school and college) that align with their career interest. So far, we have seen great results! I have eight students in the program and will send about two or three more in January. We have guidelines, an application packet, and an interview process that they students must complete before they are accepted. HOPE pays for some of it, and then the FTE money that we get from the state for each student is given to Northwestern to cover the other costs. The students are still our students, but go there for classes. I hope it continues to grow!!

Also, I joined the local Optimist Club--their focus is totally on youth in our community. They have already given us money to help a pregnant student. The club is dedicated to helping our school in any way that they can. Today, I asked our superintendent to speak at the meeting—this will give the members a clearer vision as to how they can help.

Lastly, I work very closely with Jayme Elliot, our Executive Director of Communities In Schools. She has helped me so much: she paid my registration fee to attend the National Dropout Prevention Network conference in Kentucky, she has bought supplies for me, and is helping us with our "Intervention Day" that we are having with our 9th graders. On Oct. 18th, we will meet with all of our "at risk" ninth graders on an individual basis to help them see that they have support. Each student will meet with a team consisting of a teacher, community leader, and one more person. This is the first time we have done something like this--hope it is successful!

Kristy Ellard

Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe High School, Catoosa County
kellard.lfo@catoosa.k12.ga.us

On October 10-11, 2007 Communities In Schools of Decatur County will partner with the Decatur County Board of Education and Decatur County Family Connection in sponsoring a PAL (Peer Assistance and Leadership Training) for local school and community adults. Information

concerning the program is attached (see appendix). At this time, representatives from our local high school and two middle schools will participate in the training. Dr. Myra Evans, Bainbridge High School Graduation Coach, will be trained; hopefully, the two graduation coaches from the middle schools will also be involved.

Second semester of this school term, an elective class will be taught at Bainbridge High School where selected 11th graders will be trained to become peer mentors. These mentors will then be matched with a ninth grade student who is considered at-risk of not graduating. The 9th grade students will be identified by Dr. Evans and other school personnel. We are excited about the possibilities of this program and are so glad to have the three Graduation Coaches on our team.

Martha C. Hawthorne

Executive Director
Communities In Schools of Decatur County
mhawthorne@dcboe.com

I have developed four partnerships within the community:

- The Center Pointe Counseling Center has agreed to train all of my "Peer Mentors" for free, and has given me a place to send students in need.
- Attorney Ashley Bell has formed a group of community leaders to serve as mentors for Gainesville High School. The names of about 300 students were selected as candidates.
- Nathaniel Shelton (former school social worker) is formulating a planned group to assist students who have dropped out in finding an alternative route to success or education, in order to reduce the likelihood of choosing criminal alternatives.
- Gainesville State College staff member Audrey Cheek and GHS social worker Jarod Anderson are putting together and mentoring plan to address high risk students at Gainesville High School.

I am mentoring through all these programs, and I also submit the names of potential students.

Gene Earls

Gainesville High School, Gainesville City Schools
ernest.earls@gcssk12.net

GRADUATION TEAMS

We (Graduation Team) have developed an after school group called Chat & Chew- "I'd Like to Get to Know You." This group was designed to give the "at-promise" students an opportunity to express their concerns surrounding their academic, personal and community issues. Each graduation team member chooses several "at-promise" students whom they would like to work with. Once the students are selected, they are invited to attend the after school group and a permission letter is sent home to their parents. Each graduation team member serves as the facilitator for his or her group of students. The other graduation team members are on hand to help with group supplies, snacks, etc.

At the first group meeting, the students are given the opportunity to tell the facilitator what topics they would like to discuss at each meeting. For instance, at our first meeting the students

expressed an interest in learning more about saving money, college entrance requirements, senior requirements, goals after graduating and teen pregnancy. We invite guest speakers from our school and the community to come and speak to our students about their chosen topics.

The meetings usually last one hour, and dinner is served at every meeting. The Graduation Team members donate food and other supplies to ensure that all of the meetings are a success. During our wrap up session, students give an overview of the meeting, and they decide on what will be served for dinner at the next meeting. The students really enjoy getting the chance to express what is on their mind, and at the same time, they gain valuable information. I have had students come up to me in the halls and ask how they can become a part of this dynamic after school group!

Katina Williams

Burke County High School, Burke County
kwilliams@burke.k12.ga.us

HELPFUL HINTS AND TIPS

One program I created was a Teacher Appreciation Program. This program will help recognize those teachers that go above and beyond to help students. I had the construction class build a nice wooden box that will be mounted in the hallway for the teachers and students to put recommendations for the award. I call it the Tiger Pride Award. We will give out gift certificates to restaurants, as well as a five-inch Tiger Statue. I have the administrative staff reviewing all the recommendations at the end of the month and announcing the one recommendation that really moved them.

Gary Johannes

Harris County High School, Harris County
johannes-g@harris.k12.ga.us

One of our overage freshmen has already passed The Adult Basic Ed (TABE) test and applied to Secondary Vocational Connections (SVC). SVC is an alternative, self-paced school environment that enables fastidious students to graduate with a high school diploma in as little as one year. The others are currently using TABE test study guides to prepare.

Ilna Prewitt

Kendrick High School, Muscogee County
iprewitt@mcsdga.net

I had a wonderful success just before the GHSWT. I worked with the technology department at our school to create a musical interview aimed at making students aware of all of the nuances involved in taking the new writing test. The video was created around the idea of me as a coach--like you see on the Sunday Coach shows--interviewing "former students" for tips and advice concerning the GHSWT.

For the answers to the interview questions, I chose clips of lyrics to answer the questions. For example, one question was, "What would you never expect to hear from the Graduation Coach

concerning the GHSWT?” I answered the question with a section from *American Woman* by Lenny Kravitz. The answer was, “Don't come hanging around my door/I don't want to see your face no more/I got more important things to do/Than spend my time growin' old with you.”

The video was a big hit and opened the door with some students I may not have reached otherwise. I made sure I included clips from all genres of music, and I involved students throughout the process. The video lasted around 6 minutes, but the impact has been countless.

Patsy Lewis

White County High School, White County
plewis@white.k12.ga.us

INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

I started an incentive program for the students here. I am trying to target high attendance rates while lowering disciplinary problems. I have Partners in Education donating gifts to be given away to all those students that qualify. As soon as the program is announced, (Oct. 5th) the students who do not have an unexcused absence from school or any administrative referrals will have their name put in the box. At the end of the school year we will hold a large assembly or pep rally to reward them with give-away items. Here is the kicker: I got Bill Heard Chevrolet to donate a new car, and I have found a Partner in Education to donate the cost for the tax, tag and title. So the word is out and the kids are getting excited.

Gary Johannes

Harris County High School, Harris County
johannes-g@harris.k12.ga.us

The children are really excited, and we have begun innovations like the Lunch with Coach opportunity. A selected student is given the lunch period with the coach to talk about anything they want, and get the attention that we all know kids want from adults--no matter what age.

Vencer Cotton, Sr.

Georgia Academy for the Blind
vcotton@doe.k12.ga.us

So often when students enter high school, they are not recognized for their achievements. However, even as adults, we all know that we like to be recognized, since recognition truly keeps us motivated. Therefore, I have created a display board on our media center window entitled “The Best of the Best @ BCHS.” On this board, students are spotlighted for receiving honor roll or perfect attendance. I understand that everyone will not be on the honor roll, which is why I decided to recognize perfect attendance as well.

When students receive honor roll and perfect attendance, their names are placed in a drawing at the end of the nine weeks to receive a \$25 Wal-mart, Target or Staples gift card. Those students who receive honor roll or perfect attendance are invited to participate in an Award Pizza Party during their lunch period. Parents are also included in this initiative. At the end of the

semester, parents are invited to an Achievement Awards Dinner hosted by the Graduation Team. At the dinner, the students who received honor roll or perfect attendance are recognized with an award, presented by their parent or guardian.

Katina Williams

Burke County High School, Burke County
kwilliams@burke.k12.ga.us

MENTORING

So far I have created a program called Bridges. It is a teacher/student mentoring program, where fifty teachers all choose an at-risk student from the roster we created. The teachers are forming a relationship with these students, meeting them before and after school and even on the weekends. The teachers act as an additional support between the school, student and parents. I supplied the teachers with creative activities to help them form a trusting relationship between them and their mentee. I created activity logs and evaluation sheets for documentation, and we feel this will help a lot of those at-risk students feel supported to achieve at higher levels.

Gary Johannes

Harris County High School, Harris County
johannes-g@harris.k12.ga.us

STUDENT MOTIVATION

The Guided Studies Class is composed of students from all four grades who are at-risk of failing to earn a high school diploma. The class meets for 25 minutes each day as a replacement for the student's homeroom period. This class is the nexus around which the students receive a variety of interventions and support. They are provided with tutoring, mentoring, extra counseling, instruction in appropriate learning behaviors and study skills, frequent progress monitoring, and opportunities to work on internet-based credit recovery classes for courses they previously failed.

Each student receives one-on-one tutoring from an accomplished 12th grade student. The students work with their peer tutor Monday through Thursday. The tutor is intimately involved in the education of their student, being privy to their assignments, grades, strengths and weaknesses, organizational habits, and knowledge of their teachers and classes. Through their relationship with their student, the tutor serves as a positive peer role model providing nurturing, mentoring, and an example of a successful student. This is beneficial to both students.

Adult mentoring and guidance is provided to the students from four sources. Each at risk student has a staff member that has volunteered to be their personal mentor. They will meet with the student on a weekly or biweekly basis during the class time on Fridays or at another agreed upon time. Secondly, there are several members of the community that have volunteered their time and talents to assist in the Guided Studies class. They are a great asset in helping to provide a sense of order to the class, to give encouragement and mentoring services to the students, and to provide direct assistance as a tutor for subject material, organization, and planning of studies. Thirdly, the

students will meet monthly in a small group with their guidance counselor to identify and address issues which are impeding their academic achievement and to increase the student's knowledge of their overall educational program and the options and requirements for graduation. Lastly, each of the students is on the caseload of the Graduation Coach who moderates the class, arranges the various interventions and support services, counsels, encourages, and prods the students to improve their performance in school, assists students in dealing with their parents, administrators, and teachers, and does whatever it takes to make a difference in their education.

Direct instruction and assistance is provided to the students regarding their development of the behaviors of successful learners. These are to:

- Demonstrate the desired behavior for each activity in class.
- Take notes and write down examples.
- Ask questions when you don't comprehend.
- Complete assignments diligently and hand them in on time.
- Critically assess your work when the teacher reviews assignments.
- Seek extra help when needed.
- Use study partners.
- Maintain and utilize your notes, examples, work samples, and previous tests and quizzes.

The Graduation Coach works in partnership with the student's parents and teachers to facilitate the development and generalization of these behavioral concepts. This includes regular intervention in their other class periods.

Progress reports for all classes will be provided for these students every three weeks rather than on the normal six week cycle. If they drop below 70 in any class, a Parent-Teacher-Student Plan for Success will be developed for that class and a progress report for that class will be sent home weekly until the grade returns to 70 or greater.

If the student is currently succeeding in all of their regularly scheduled classes, they may participate in an internet-based credit recovery program called PLATO to make up for a previous failure. Participation in this extra class will occur before or after the regular school day and during three days of their Guided Studies class. This program helps the credit deficient student to get back on track for graduation within the customary four year period.

Class design and implementation by Tony Szczesniak, Graduation Coach

Tony Szczesniak

Chattahoochee High School, Fulton County
Szczesniak@fulton.k12.ga.us

TRANSITION PROGRAMS

One thing that I am very excited about is the progress of our Summer Panther Academy attendees. We ran a summer transition program for the first time this year, inviting students who were determined by their 8th grade teachers to be in danger of not having a successful freshman year, and who exhibited several at risk factors that might keep them from graduating from high school.

Since this was our first year running a program like this, we wanted to keep it small and targeted towards those students that the teachers really felt would need this kind of support. Forty

five students were invited to attend. They all received personal invitations in the mail, a follow up phone call and, for those we couldn't reach, a home visit from our administrators to invite them to come. That was followed with a phone call reminder. With all this effort only twenty students came.

In our Summer Panther Academy (that the teachers have nicknamed the SPA) we had guest speakers, in depth discussions about credits and study skills, and completed a learning styles inventory using materials from High School 101. Students were also given their schedules and lockers early along with a complete tour of the campus. All students received a t-shirt with the class of 2012 on it as well as the name of the academy. They are the only freshmen to receive these.

The last day of the academy we had a massive scavenger hunt. The students were divided into teams and had to find flags, using clues that had been strategically placed around the school. I was afraid that the students were going to think this was a little lame, but my goodness! They were so excited! When they evaluated their experience at the academy, the hunt was by far their favorite part, followed closely by the food we served for lunch each day.

All this was accomplished because of a collaborative effort between me, my administrators, and the faculty that participated. It was funded in part by Family Connections. They paid for lunch, materials, prizes and stipends for the kids that attended each day. Overall, it was a huge success for those twenty students.

Now we are five weeks into school, and seventeen of those twenty students are passing 5-6 courses (we only offer six in a day). While failing one class is still too many, for most of these kids this is quite an accomplishment. Of the other three, two are failing two courses but none had a grade less than a 65. They entered this school year knowing how to navigate their schedule, find their locker, and get through the lunch line; they also knew what failing a class does to their credit situation and how that affects their high school graduation. They were already recognized by the office staff, the administrators and at least four other teachers who made it a point of saying hello each time we saw them. I continue to meet with these twenty young people as a group once a month to discuss various topics. Our first meeting was about clubs and getting involved in school. One student was telling me the other day, "I felt like a rock star with all these adults knowing my name at the beginning of the year. My friends kept saying, 'How do they know you?'"

The two new Middle School Graduation Coaches were so excited about this progress that they have now joined my high school School Improvement Team that is studying high school transition. We have decided to start this effort earlier with Pre-Freshmen Seminars that will take place throughout this school year. We have come up with monthly topics that will cover many things freshmen want to know. We plan on beginning a student shadowing day, where at-risk 8th graders will spend a day in high school shadowing a "former" at-risk upperclassman. The three of us have been meeting monthly as well to develop programs and themes for this joint effort. Our plan is to open this program up to all rising freshmen this summer.

Dorcus Powell
Lakeside High School, Columbia County
dorcus.powell@ccboe.net

APPENDIX

PAL PEER HELPING PROGRAM **Submitted by Communities In Schools of Decatur County**

1. peer \ 'pier \ n one's equal
2. assistance \ as- sis - tance \ n giving aid; helping
3. leadership \ lead - er - ship \ n the ability to guide, lead or conduct

PAL® Peer Assistance and Leadership is an award winning, non-profit program providing effective training in "resiliency" strategies. The PAL® peer helping program combats problems such as violence in schools, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, gang participation and school dropouts by providing a critical line of defense both at school and in the home through building peer helping programs all across the United States of America.

The mission of the PAL® peer helping program is to utilize the potential of young people to make a difference in their schools and communities. In this effort, PAL® Services, WAP Inc. staff provides continual training of new students and adult training for improvement or enhancement of existing programs to meet community needs. We inform educators of latest developments in the field, ensuring adherence to programmatic standards, continually adding components such as suicide prevention education, improving communication skills, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and substance abuse prevention.

The PAL® Peer Assistance and Leadership philosophy is to recognize the potential of youth as a resource and catalyst for change in other troubled youth. They provide a critical first line of defense in building resiliency among peers. The PAL® peer helping program philosophy identifies an innate capacity for social understanding, personal well-being and community participation within every person. When participating in positive, productive pursuits with peers, youth can more easily resist negative influences, such as illegal use of addictive substances, excessive school absences and unlawful activities. The goals of PAL® Services, WAP inc. are to build peer helping programs throughout Texas; provide training, networking opportunities, and technical assistance to create exemplary PAL® programs; and most importantly, to replicate a proven model of peer helping, PAL®.

PAL® Peer Assistance and Leadership began in 1980 as a "peer helping" program, combining "peer assistance" and "peer leadership" strategies originally developed in the late 1970's. Over the last fifteen years, WAP has significantly enhanced and expanded these basic prevention strategies, evolving the PAL® peer helping program from an informal, extra-curricular activity in a single school district, into a formally structured, curriculum-based program, adopted by the Texas Education Agency as an accredited elective course. Because of its reputation for effectiveness and efficiency, over 750 school districts throughout Texas have requested services from PAL® Services WAP, Inc., and WAP has documented substantiated PAL® peer helping programs in over 1000 elementary, middle and high schools in Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington.

August 29, 2007

Dear Joan:

Communities In Schools of Decatur County, Inc., the Decatur County School System and Decatur County Family Connection are joining forces to bring Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL) training to local schools, after-school programs and other organizations who wish to consider implementation of a Peer to Peer Mentor program into their existing curriculum. The training is free of charge to all participants.

PAL training sessions will be conducted October 10-11, 2007 from 8:15 a.m. until 3:45 p.m. each day at the Decatur County School Support Center. The Center is located at 507 Martin Street, Bainbridge, Georgia.

PAL Peer Assistance and Leadership is an award-winning peer helping program providing effective training in helping skills. PAL combats problems such as violence in schools, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, gang participation, and school dropouts by providing a critical line of defense both at school and in the home. The goal of the program is to tap into the potential of young people to make a difference in their schools and communities.

PAL began at one high school in Austin, Texas in 1980 and grew into a district-wide, nationally recognized research-based program. Today, PAL is active in over 1000 schools throughout Texas. Owing to its tremendous success, PAL has also expanded into fourteen additional states: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah and Washington.

This is how it works: after careful selection of PAL candidates by school representatives, the students (known as "PALS") undergo a four-to six-week training period, provided primarily by the previously trained PAL sponsor. Using a PAL Teacher's Manual as a guide, sponsors focus on communication skills, group dynamics, self awareness, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Upon completion of this phase, the Pals are placed in peer-to-peer situations with other students (known as "Palees") in which they employ the training components in order to develop positive, supportive, and helpful relationships. PAL empowers students to serve effectively in specific peer-to-peer or general leadership roles.

Class size will be limited to 25 adults. Therefore; if you would like to be included in the training please do not hesitate to contact Martha Hawthorne at : mhawthorne@dcboc.com or mhawthorne@alltel.net; (w) 229-248-2829; (c) 229-220-2272; (h) 229-872-3500 or Ami Mejia at amejia@bainbridge.edu or (c) 229-220-1901.

Thank you,

Martha C. Hawthorne, Executive Director
Communities in Schools of Decatur County, Inc.

Dr. Suzi Bonifay, Assistant Superintendent
Decatur County School System

Ami Mejia, Director
Family Connections of Decatur County

Tommie Howell, Principal
Bainbridge High School

Communities In Schools of Decatur County

