

Hope for All: Addressing the “At-Risk” Student at Delano High School

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Hope for All: Addressing the "At-Risk" Student at Delano High School

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Executive Summary

Although significantly lower than the state average, Delano High School administration seeks to eliminate the dropout rate by developing an intervention program that motivates at-risk students to want to succeed in the class room and in life.

Many negative individual and social factors are associated with dropping out. Poverty, crime, poorer health, cannot qualify for most jobs, and hurting the economy are just a few examples. To solve this problem, the school started an intervention program for the 2013-2014 school year that incorporated various approaches such as Career Choices, A-Plus, and other components to help motivate students to want to succeed in school and in life.

Approved by school officials, I was allowed to observe the class room to help find ways where the program can be enhanced. By conducting research on current intervention programs, motivation, and dropout factors, combined with my observations on the current intervention program for the 2013-2014 school year, I found that although it was designed with good intentions, it lacks structure and support in various areas. It is recommended that the program be restructured with an addition of a few added components. Some components include changing the pacing guide of the program, instructor expectations, classroom modifications, and eliminating the belief that intervention is a credit recovery class. If done correctly, my proposed program will eliminate the dropout rate at Delano High School and create motivated students that are college and workforce, and who are ready to contribute positively to their community.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Background of the Problem

The battle to eliminate high school dropouts is a never ending battle that many school districts continuously seek to solve. To combat dropout rates, public high schools have been allotted revenue by local, state, and government funding, grants, or other sources in which they can fund programs that aim to reduce the dropout rate. Because not all high school student populations are the same, there is no single intervention that saves all students from dropping out.

What causes students to drop out? Research shows that there are numerous amounts of factors that can lead to a student dropping out. However, these factors do not affect all students the same. For example, students from low-socioeconomic status families are more likely to drop out than students who come from a high-socio economic status family (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & KewalRamani, 2011). However, not all students from poor families drop out, in fact, some go on to graduate as valedictorians at their high school.

To help explain why students dropout, I conducted literature reviews on how motivation plays a major role on whether a student drops out or not. Because motivation of a student varies on a cases by case bases, I believe that if we enroll an at-risk student into a curriculum that engrains motivation into the student, we can have a better chance at reducing the Delano High School dropout rate.

This study will entail an observation of the current intervention program at Delano High School (Delano, CA) for the 2013-2014 school year and based off observations and research, how can we better improve the intervention class. We will reassess how the current curriculum could be improved by conducting the class more efficiently and effectively and also, by

discussing what could be added to the current curriculum to make sure that the at-risk students are gaining valuable life skills that help them understand the value of a high school diploma.

Methods and Procedures

The program proposal will be based on a variety of methods and procedures. A review of literature such as books, journals, online resources, etc. regarding dropouts, motivation theories, intervention programs, and more will be combined with the researcher's observations of Delano High School's current intervention program during the 2013-2014 school year. Over 160 hours were spent observing the intervention program as a whole. This will serve as bases for which my program proposal will originate from.

Importance of the Study

The importance of this study is to make sure that the intervention program at Delano High School is more than just a course where they can make up credit. A credit recovery course will only give short term rewards vs. the lifelong rewards my program will have. The study will reveal how getting at-risk students to become engaged and motivated to see school and life differently can be long felt after they graduate high school. Furthermore, the study reveals the current weaknesses in the already in place intervention program at Delano High School. My study will provide suggestions and enhancement strategies that will make the students thrive in the curriculum.

This project will be of great worth to the administration department at Delano High School. It will allow them to see the significance of every implementation used for the course. It will show them how to identify teachers qualified to teach the new intervention class. It will entail the significance of how motivation towards school and class room engagement affects ours

students. It will give them a clear understanding of what resources, accommodations, and faculty support are needed to run a first class intervention program. The project would also have great worth to the Delano High School Joint Union School District. Because the district is composed of six different high schools, a successful intervention program at Delano High School could be the model for other intervention programs used within the district. Funds are so often wasted with hit and miss interventions. Allowing my proposed intervention to launch followed by a one year follow up of intervention student interviews could help support a replica of my intervention model to the other sister schools. Also, as time moves forward the district can look at the number of intervention students who dropped out before their graduation date to determine if it was affective or not.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review and Statement of the Problem

Using scholarly journals, research data, and other credible sources, this chapter is intended to provide a thorough understanding of how the role of motivation affects high school dropouts and identify the problem facing Delano High School. This chapter will first provide statistical information on how dropouts affect individual and social factors of the dropout student and society. Then this chapter will discuss intervention programs that address motivational issues amongst high school drop outs. Lastly, this chapter will define the problem at Delano High School.

Literature Review Overview

When looking to address how motivational factors can help at-risk Delano High School students, it is important to understand the many variations in which a high school student dropping out can occur. For the purposes of the study, the following definitions for will apply:

Dropout: A student who does not complete high school by their expected graduation rate.

Graduate: A student who completes high school on or before their expected graduation date.

Motivation: The process of starting, directing, and maintaining physical and psychological activities (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2002).

At-risk: Used to describe students or groups of students who are considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

Despite the concern over dropout rates, there has been a significant decline between 1990 and 2011. Most notably, the rates declined for Whites (from 9 percent to 5 percent), Blacks (from 13 percent to 7 percent), and Hispanics (from 32 percent to 14 percent) (NCES 2013-037). The data shows that the high school dropout rate is declining, however those who are dropping out of high school more often are students from ethnic backgrounds. For example, www.statisticbrain.com states that in 2013, the Hispanic population had a dropout rate of 15.9 percent compared to whites who only saw 5 percent of their student's dropout (2013). In regards to which gender is more prevalent in the high school graduation rate, statistics show that in the school year 2011–12, females had a higher graduation rate with 85 percent vs. 78 percent for males (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014).

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status of a high school student's family and community also plays a significant role in determining a student's chance to graduate on time. In 2009, poor (bottom 20 percent of all family incomes) students were five times more likely to drop out of high school than high-income (top 20 percent of all family incomes) students (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & KewalRamani, 2011). Many of the life difficulties that lower income students must face are an inconvenience to their studies and focus towards school. Compared to two parent families and families with economic wealth, a child is better off in those type of environments because they are likely to not deal with a troubled family or neighborhood. Family poverty is associated with a number of adverse conditions — high mobility and homelessness; hunger and food insecurity; parents who are in jail or absent; domestic violence; drug abuse and other problems — known as “toxic stressors” because they are severe, sustained and not buffered by supportive relationships (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012).

Impact of Community

Not only do students who come from a low socio-economic family background have a higher chance of dropping out of high school, but a student's community can play a negative role on the student as well. For instance, students can be affected when they are in communities of concentrated disadvantage with extremely high levels of joblessness, family instability, poor health, substance abuse, poverty, welfare dependency and crime (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). Disadvantaged communities influence child and adolescent development through the lack of resources (such as playgrounds and parks, after-school programs) or negative peer influences (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). In other words, a community that breeds troubled youth because of its unfavorable social factors is likely to have a negative impact on a youth's likelihood of graduating high school.

Consequences of Dropping out

Research data also shows how dropout students are affected financially along with the community and nation. The Alliance for Excellent Education is a Washington, DC-based national policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, especially those who are traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). The organization gathers data and conducts research to promote programs that help students obtain a high school diploma because they know the negative consequences for not having one. In today's era, skipping out on earning a high school can come at a costly price. For instance, without a high school diploma, high school dropouts are far more likely to spend their lives periodically unemployed, on government assistance, or cycling in and out of the prison system (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). High school dropouts can also hurt a society indirectly. Many people suspect

that a high school dropout only hurts their own life chances such as landing a good job. However, larger economic troubles are present when a large number of students drop out. Lower local, state, and national tax revenues are the most obvious consequences of higher dropout rates; even when dropouts are employed, they earn, on average, \$8,000 less annually than high school graduates and they pay less in taxes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Compared to students who obtain a high school diploma, dropouts do hurt themselves and the communities in which they live in. Even at the state and national level, taxes and funds directed at welfare programs drain away monies that could be used for higher priority matters. For example, tax revenue can instead be put into the nation's national deficit, or into educational programs that focus helping students who have been labeled at risk to graduate high school.

National, State Funding, and Other Resources

Public high schools are provided local, state, and federal funds in order to complete their task at producing college/ workforce ready high school graduates. Funds to produce a high school graduate prepared for life after college comes costly. For the 2011-12 school year, Delano Joint Union High School District spent \$9,363 of total general funds to educate each student (djuhsd.org, 2014). The funding needed to run a high school is costly and funds are often scarce and cannot be used to fund school wide programs. Also, school districts are not entitled to unlimited funding to accomplish their goals nor do they often have rich bank accounts to put money into any programs they deem necessary. It is important to note that high schools use their funds effectively and should be used on programs deemed highly important.

In addition to the funding received for each student pupil, Delano Joint Union High School District receives state and federal categorical funding for special programs. For the 2011-

12 school year, the district received federal, state, and local aid for the following categorical, special education, and support programs:

- Agricultural Vocational Incentive Grants
- ARRA: State Fiscal Stabilization Fund
- Economic Impact Aide
- Education Jobs Funds
- Lottery: Instructional Materials
- Partnership Academies Program
- Special Education
- Title I, II, III
- Transportation
- Vocational Programs
- Workforce Investment Act
- AVID
- Other Local: Locally Defined (djuhsd.org, 2014)

Delano High School places a high value in enhancing their students through programs that give their students the necessary skills and opportunities to get ahead in life. With careful planning, strong leadership, and enthusiastic teachers, Delano High School runs effective programs to aid its student population for achieving success.

Motivation Research

Dropping out of school is not the result of an abrupt, unconsidered decision, but an overt response to the impact of circumstances related to one or more factors over a student's lifetime.

Administrators, teachers, and other school staff surrounding a high school student can do little about a student's home life, their socioeconomic status, types of peers they decide to hang out with, and other factors. However, motivation can be a tool that school staff can try to manipulate in order to get an at-risk student to want to graduate. According to Kramer (2000), "Motivation and a self-regulated strategy, including self-efficacy and a learning goal orientation, are important factors for both high and low achievers" (p. 83). Although there are many theories in the scope of motivation, this section will focus on those that are most likely to apply to at-risk high school students.

Unmotivated-Disengaged Students

Not all high school students approach school with same levels of motivation. Many are disengaged and unmotivated to complete the daily tasks required to be a successful student. Student's disengagement, or an unmotivated student, is when a student is no longer interested in school as evidenced by poor attendance, misbehavior, and course failures (Balfanz et al., 2007). Student disengagement has been described as the "most immediate and persistent issue" facing students and educators because disengaged students lack the psychological investment necessary to master academic knowledge and skills (Newmann et al. 1992). Adolescents who are bored, distracted, emotionally troubled, or do not see the value of schooling have the means to drop out of school altogether (Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn, 2003, p. 13). Even if they do not drop out of school, adolescents have many alternative activities to occupy their time and attention, including working for pay, sports, video games, social activities, and for some, less socially sanctioned activities (Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn, 2003, p.13). Schools, therefore, have considerable competition for the attention of their clients. It is not

surprising that homework does not necessarily have a high priority, despite its apparent contribution to learning (Cooper, Lindsay, Nye, & Greathouse, 1998).

For students who have been labeled as at-risk, school personnel need to assume that the lack of motivation is one of the causes and address the issue through intervention classes or any other supportive program that addresses disengagement and lack of motivation. Increasing motivation and engagement is unlikely to be accomplished by simple policy prescriptions, such as raising standards, promoting accountability, or increasing school funding-although these may be helpful in the right set of circumstances (Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn, 2003, p. 14). The essential challenge is to create a set of circumstances in which a high school student can take satisfaction in academic work and come to trust that the knowledge and skills they are being asked to learn. The students need to feel that the academic work teachers put in front of them is important and meaningful for them and worth their effort, and that they are reasonably able to learn the material taught to them.

Members from the Board on Children, Youth and Families (BOCYF), Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (DBASSE) and the National Research Council concluded that for many students, their engagement and motivation to learn depend on a confluence of supports, none of which is sufficient on its own. These supports include:

- A challenging but individualized curriculum that is focused on understanding.
- Knowledgeable, skilled, and caring teachers.
- A school culture that is centered on learning.
- A school community that engenders a sense of support and belonging, with opportunities to interact with academically engaged peers.
- Strong ties linking the school with students' families and communities.

- An organizational structure and services that address students' nonacademic needs.
- Opportunities to learn the value of schoolwork for future educational and career prospects (Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn, 2003, p. 14).

Addressing most if not all of these “supports” are key for school personnel if their goal is to get their students engaged in the classroom. It is also important to note that an intervention program should address most of these “supports” if it is going to be used for at-risk students.

Student Motivation Theories and Concepts

Although lack of motivation is typically not the single factor for any student dropping out of high school, motivation and a student’s level of engagement towards their academics is a major factor in how well the student does in school. Researchers from the Center on Education Policy state that:

“Although not as frequently discussed as other aspects of reform, motivation is a crucial part of a student’s experience from preschool onward. Motivation can affect how students approach school in general, how they relate to teachers, how much time and effort they devote to their studies, how much support they seek when they’re struggling, how much they attempt to engage or disengage their fellow students from academics, how they perform on assessments (and therefore how the school performs), and so on” (2012).

There are several different approaches to motivation. Here, I will explain how a diverse number of them are applicable to at-risk high school students.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

The engagement of students in the classroom is often determined by either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. To clarify these forms of motivation, intrinsic is defined as the execution of

an activity because of the inherent satisfaction arising from it rather than due to some separate outcome, while extrinsic motivation can be defined as doing action because of a resulting separable outcome that is not internally based (Mirabela-Constanta & Maria-Madela, 2011). Research has demonstrated a positive correlation between intrinsic motivations in the classroom and academic achievement (Corpus, Lepper, & Lyengar, 2005).

Intrinsic motivation occurs when we act without any obvious external rewards. For example, an intrinsically motivated student will do great in their history class because they really enjoy the subject, not because they will get an A from the school and their parents will give them a cash reward for it. Students will simply enjoy an activity or see it as an opportunity to explore, learn, and actualize our potential (Coon & Mitterer, 2010). The intrinsically motivated student focuses on the task itself for the pleasure of the experience and the outcome. Furthermore, students who are intrinsically motivated early within the schooling process tend to remain motivated and have a better chance of success (Wiest, Wong, Cervantes, Craik, & Kreil, 2001). Intrinsic factors will vary amongst students for it could be a multitude of factors that help develop internal motivation. One significant factor found by researchers discusses parent involvement as an indicator of student intrinsic motivation. Their studies suggests that parental involvement such as participation in school events can increase student motivation (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan Holbein, 2005). This shows that parents can help instill motivation within a student that pushes them to become self-motivated.

Intrinsic motivation is a product of becoming goal oriented, which is a motivational variable with regard to intrinsic motivation (Song & Grabowski, 2006). A major aspect to achieving a high school diploma is to set it as your goal and to set the necessary objectives in order for the goal to become a reality. A student having goals and implementing those goals

within the educational setting is an indicator of engagement (Song & Grabowski, 2006). On the other hand, when students are not engaged in the education process, they approach their goal with little to no effort. They will then begin the path of disengagement in the education process. By understanding the variables associated with intrinsic motivation can help educators create effective intervention practices and prevent disengagement.

Extrinsic motivation offers outside rewards for task completion (Corpus et al., 2005). Schools in the United States often use the concepts of extrinsic motivation, although it is recommended that those concepts be discouraged (Corpus et al., 2005). Research suggests that extrinsic motivation can have a negative effect on the success of students (Hayenga & Corpus, 2010). Students who are offered reward systems and various extrinsically motivating factors for success perform lower than students who have an internal motivation for task completion (Hayenga & Corpus, 2010).

Engagement

Engagement is impacted by motivational beliefs, such as choice, persistence and effort, and is not a proxy for the construct of motivation itself (Pekrun et al, 2007). Three components describe the level to which students are engaged in school are behavioral, affective (affective engagement includes feelings, beliefs and attitudes about school, and includes constructs such as belongingness and value of education) and cognitive. Behavioral engagement refers to the nature of the behaviors (positive or negative) and where it occurs (in or out of class) (Moulton, p. 20). Cognitive engagement includes psychological processes of self-regulation, goal orientation and perceptions of competence (Fredericks et al, 2004). Of the three dimensions, behavioral engagement is a significant predictor of dropout, as is the global measure of engagement overall

(Archambault et al, 2009).

Self-Efficacy Theory

Motivation that comes from self- efficacy is impacted by the beliefs that one has about their capabilities, and these feelings ultimately contribute to one's performance in school (Pintrich, Schunk, & Meece, 2009). These judgments influence how students think, motivate themselves and act (Bandura, 1995). A student who is confident in their ability to become proficient in their academics plays a lasting role on their school goals, level attentiveness, and their quest to finishing school. Furthermore, these beliefs influence emotional state such as stress, anxiety and depression which can intrude on and impair intellectual functioning (Zimmerman, 1995). Students engage in tasks in which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not. The higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence and resilience students exert in face of adverse situations (Alfassi, 2003). As a result of these influences, self-efficacy beliefs are strong determinants of the level of accomplishment that students finally attain (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996). Thus, self-efficacy beliefs play a key role in setting the course of intellectual development and operate as an important contributor to academic success (Bandura, 1995).

Self-determination Theory

Schools throughout the country are using self-determination instruction as a way to better motivate students and meet the growing need to teach children and youth ways to more fully accept responsibility for their lives by helping them to identify their needs and develop strategies to meet those needs (APA, 2004). Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory describes how academic behavior is influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (1985). Therefore, a student can either become motivated by internal, or external reasons alone, or could have a

mixture of both. The completely self-determined individual, comprising one extreme of the spectrum, internalizes their reasons for engaging in a certain behavior, while the unmotivated person, at the other extreme, is completely detached and feels their behavior is externally driven and out of their control (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006).

Researchers from the American Psychological Association (APA) have found that

Numerous studies have found that students who are more involved in setting educational goals are more likely to reach their goals. When students perceive that the primary focus of learning is to obtain external rewards, such as a grade on an exam, they often perform more poorly, think of themselves as less competent, and report greater anxiety than when they believe that exams are simply a way for them to monitor their own learning (2004).

Self-determination theory points out that intrinsic motivation is more powerful than extrinsic. Because extrinsic motivation comes from outside sources such as parents, teachers, and friends, the pressure that external forces put on a student is not as motivating compared to if they internally enjoyed the challenges and preparation for the task at hand. Hardre and Reeve tested a model of how rural students ultimately decide to drop out of high school, and the influence their teachers' supportive or controlling behaviors have on this process. They found that when students felt neglected or frustrated by the behaviors of their teachers, they increasingly considered dropping out of school (2003). This finding occurred while controlling for prior achievement. This latter finding is important because it lends support for looking at dropout not only as an achievement issue, but as a motivation issue (Hardre & Reeve, 2003).

Dropouts also had higher levels of lacking motivation than students who graduated, as well as lower self-perceptions of competence and autonomy, and felt they had less support from teachers, parents and school administrators. They contend that high levels of self-determination allow students to identify with school and internalize the value for themselves- seeing school as important for their own purposes, and thus being self-determined. Those who do not see a purpose in school are at more risk of dropping out.

Programs to promote self-determination help students acquire knowledge, skills and beliefs that meet their needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness. Such programs also provide instruction aimed specifically at helping students play a more active role in educational planning (APA, 2004).

Intervention and Retention Programs

Intervention and retention programs for high school students are used throughout the U.S. Not only are these programs designed to help give the student a higher chance at earning their high school diploma, but from an economic point of view, society will largely benefit financially when a student graduates high school. According to the Alliance for Research and Education,

“Roughly 139,400 students in California did not graduate from high school in 2011; the lost lifetime earnings for that class of dropouts alone total \$21 billion. If just half of California’s dropouts had graduated, they would likely have provided the following economic benefits to their state \$4.5 billion in increased home sales and \$131 million in increased annual auto sales, 8,700 new jobs and a \$1.9 billion increase in the gross state product, and \$167 million in increased annual state tax revenue. If California’s high schools were to graduate all

students ready for college, the state would likely save as much as \$1.1 billion in college remediation costs and lost earnings” (2012).

It is no wonder the nation and state are investing a mass amount of monies into retention and intervention programs. Furthermore, the costs for implementing intervention programs that focus on helping high school students’ graduate are far less than if no monies were spent at all.

Someone who does not graduate high school is prone to experiencing many negative individual and social factors. It is important that schools make efforts in emphasizing the importance of obtaining a high school diploma. Intervention programs can help enforce this belief to those who cannot see the value of a high school diploma. Because they are young and lack life experiences, many high school students do not realize that dropping out of school would likely mean they would be associated with have lower median incomes and higher unemployment rates, live in diminished communities, rely on public assistance, have poorer health and less opportunities in higher education, are parents of children who drop out and have higher crime rates (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006; Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001; Laird, Cataldi, Kewal, Ramani, & Chapman, 2008; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000).

Much research has been done on current and past intervention programs that focus on dropouts. This section will examine the key components of what intervention programs are doing throughout the nation. Dynarski performed an evaluation of 20 programs funded by the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program. The evaluation found the following key components:

- Smaller class sizes

- Support enhanced communication and positive relationships between students and teachers
- Individual assistance (academic and behavioral);
- Support for personal / family issues through counseling and access to social services; and Specific assistance to obtain GED certificates (2001).

Schargel and Smink conducted a body of work generated by the National Dropout Prevention Center on early intervention programs. These components include:

- Family involvement,
- Early childhood education, and
- Strong reading and writing programs.
- Supportive, positive adult support.
- Appropriate academic supports
- System-wide approach
- Partnerships with mental health providers / community resources (2001).

Fashola and Slavin performed a review of six dropout prevention and college attendance programs for students placed at risk. They found the following key components:

- Increasing positive teacher / student relationships;
- Creation of attainable short and long term goals;
- Relevant academic assistance; and
- Encourage family participation (1998).

Hayward and Tallmadge did an evaluation of dropout prevention and reentry projects in vocational education funded under the Cooperative Demonstration Program (CDP) of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. They found the following components:

- Smaller learning environment
- Vocational education with occupational concentration
- Formal counseling component:
 - Attention to personal issues along with
 - Career counseling,
 - Life-skills instruction.
- Systematic coordination of academic and vocational components;
- Structured environment
 - Clear and equitably enforced behavioral expectations; and
 - Supportive, positive adult attention (1995).

Various approaches can be seen when trying to find strategies that will help the at-risk student. Crafting a curriculum and program that emphasizes these components altogether is no easy task. However, by having an understanding of what components are being used, school officials need to figure out what interventions help to keep students in school in order to earn a high school diploma and to compete in a technologically advanced world.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a research based intervention class to Delano High School Students who have been formally labeled by school personnel as “at-risk“. The desired one year intervention course is to contain curriculum and components that assist the student in graduating high school, aim at raising the student’s motivational output towards their academics

and, to turn them into college/work-force ready high school graduates. By doing so, we can increase academic engagement through interactive skill based curriculum. As a result, Delano High School will sharply reduce their high school dropout rate, and produce a previously predicted negative member to society, into a positive productive member of society who is ready to contribute positively to it.

Definition of the Problem

Background Information

Delano High School is dominantly populated with Hispanic students making it more at risk for having high school dropouts. In addition, the poverty rates for the Bakersfield-Delano, CA metro Area reported as 24.5 percent in 2011. Delano places itself amongst the highest poverty infested cities in California only second to the Fresno in poverty (2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data). Because Delano, CA has lower status socioeconomic families, it is all the more important to address dropout rates through intervention programs.

As part of the school's mission, Delano High School is committed to providing every student a clean, safe, and orderly environment which will advance academic achievement, technological skills, social awareness, and personal growth. Delano High School has created an environment which fosters academic excellence among the student body. Their goal is to create paths in which students are equipped with the academic and vocational skills necessary to prepare them for today's work environment. As a result, Delano High School expects its students to exemplify academic excellence, communicate effectively, and demonstrate responsibility. In recent years, the school has done so well that the current Delano High School principal expresses on the Annual School Report Card (SARC) that Delano High School is a California Distinguished School, a "Shining Star" school, U.S. News and World Report "Silver Medal"

honoree, Golden Bell Award recipient, and Title I Academic Achievement Award winner” (djuhsd.org, 2014).

Because Delano High School is always continuously exploring ways to improve its academic programs, it is looking to become even better at increasing its school’s graduation rate. Compared to other high schools at a state wide level, Delano High School has proven to be exceptional. Delano High School’s dropout rate for the 2011-2012 school year was 2.7% while the average for California high schools was 13.1%. Although the need for an intervention program does not appear imminent, Delano High School is seeking to develop an intervention program that can show it will retain its students and get them to graduate at Delano High School. Making sure that an intervention program is in place by the 2014-2015 school year is a priority for the school. However, they have ensured that the program that is to be put into action should be supported by careful observations and research. Conducting a new program without first gathering data to justify may lead to a waste of resources. The U.S. Department of Education states that:

“In many cases, schools use what could be termed “hit or miss” interventions—that is, interventions are not informed by student data, applied consistently, or integrated with curricula and instruction. Unfortunately, hit-or-miss interventions allow students to slip through the cracks, and those who begin a course performing below grade level or well behind their peers are at risk of never catching up.” They go on to explain what makes a good intervention program for the 21st century high school student. “ This guide describes an alternative—and more equitable—approach: a collaborative professional culture that anticipates, prepares for, and responds to individual

learning needs, that accelerates knowledge and skill acquisition, and that remains unwaveringly focused on ensuring college and career readiness for all students” (2013).

Goals and Objectives of the Intervention Program

Traditionally, Delano High School has placed a great emphasis on addressing the dropout rate. That may explain why its average dropout rate is much less than the state average district has tried numerous programs in which many have succeeded and few have failed. For the 2013-2014 school year, interventions that were implemented include Special Education Programs (used to address students with physical, mental, and learning disabilities) Credit Recovery (students use computer software to make up a class that they previously failed), Mandatory Tiger Tutorial (MTT- a campus wide after school tutorial for low academic students), and other after school programs held by general education teachers have been used to address at-risk students. In addition to the 2013-2014 school year, Delano High School implemented a scaled down intervention “based” course. The goal of my suggested intervention program is to combine and enhance the current intervention curriculum by integrating it with other researched based curriculum and approaches. The plan is to have it ready to use for the 2014-2015 school year. Through research based findings on curriculum that addresses students and aims at boosting motivation, the new intervention course will offer an at-risk student a class that they have not yet seen before. The goal of the proposed intervention program is to increase Delano’s Graduation rate by targeting “at risk” 10th graders who either failed one or more freshman classes, were recommended by a teacher who may see the student as having a dire situation, or if the student is lacking critically in any part of their academic career while in the high school. The objective is to

retain Delano High School's at risk 10th grade students by providing a support program that utilizes research-based interventions.

Major Stakeholders

For the United States, the costs of doing nothing about high school dropouts are enormous and far outweigh the cost of action. Having a safety net to catch high school students who are failing in course work is essential to increasing the school's graduation rate.

Furthermore, a school that implements an intervention program does well to itself, the student, and the many stakeholders out in the community.

Because the main goal of this study is to implement a creative and innovative curriculum in which students who are unmotivated can be interested in, the most obvious stakeholder is the at-risk student whom the high school aims to treat. As we know the student has a vast amount of interests in such a program because it could be the difference between getting a high school diploma or not. As stated in an earlier passage, without a high school diploma, high school dropouts are far more likely to spend their lives periodically unemployed, on government assistance, or cycling in and out of the prison system (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014). Therefore it is critical that schools use intervention programs to help eliminate the negative factors that a potential high school dropout would deal with.

Teachers, parents, administrators, school board members, and all other school personnel are also key stake holders who benefit from having an at-risk intervention program. For teachers, there are numerous reasons but mainly because it ensures that they have the support of school officials. Having an intervention program for at risk students gives off a student-first atmosphere. Teachers will see that students are a priority and not just as objects to be funneled in and out of the school system. Morale will be high for teachers and work would be meaningful knowing that

school officials are focusing their energy and funding for the at-risk youth. The intervention program will also benefit school administration, school officials, and other school personnel in many ways. The most important way is in terms of increasing the graduation rate and eliminating the number of dropouts the school averages per year. Schools receive funding per student so losing a student hurts the funding aspect.

The intervention program also plays an important role in the community. Implementing an intervention program ensures the community that the school district is putting the local youth as a top priority in terms of graduation. Furthermore, community groups, business owners, and professional organizations benefit from high school students when they obtain their high school diploma. Owning a high school diploma is strong indicator that the student is more college and workforce ready. A report from the National Center on Education and the Economy it is clear that for a substantial majority of high school graduates, being ready to be successful in the first year of a typical community college program is tantamount to being ready for both college and work (2013, pg.1). Obtaining a high school diploma does not always guarantee you will have a beneficial member of the community, but it is more likely they will be a more productive and valuable community member because of their acquirement of skills and achievements. Other stakeholders include potential enrollments, youth organizations, the faith community, media, vendors and whoever else that may be affected by the school's actions.

Goals and Objectives of the Study

The goal of this study is to conduct research and implement a strategy that uses research based intervention programs and motivation theories to support a curriculum that addresses 10th grade at-risk Delano High School students. A review of the literature is done on motivational theories and on intervention programs used in the high school setting, and the research will be

integrated with Delano High School's current intervention model. As a result, my study will serve as a foundation for future intervention curriculum, in which Delano High School can decide whether or not to use my research based integrated curriculum for at-risk 10th graders.

Measures of Effectiveness

To compare the proposed program to the current intervention model, this research will use the criteria of effectiveness and feasibility. Effectiveness means if the programs can achieve the goal of increasing the graduation rates of "at risk" 10th graders at Delano High School. Feasibility is about the possibility of the programs to achieve that goal.

Potential Solutions

Alternatives to solving Delano High School's dropout rate may include:

- Leaving the current program as is. The program is focused on helping students make up credits and does apply some curriculum that discusses careers. The program has been successful in helping students make up classes but lacks in motivational curriculum that will benefit the students to continue their efforts after they leave the program.
- Another solution could be to eliminate the program to focus funding on other programs within Delano High School. Programs such as AVID, Migrant Program, and other programs used to help students graduate.
- The researcher proposes to provide Delano High School an intervention program that provides researched based systematic interventions. I intend on conducting research on various proven intervention programs that have worked and that best apply for the typical Delano High School intervention student.

Studies have shown that there are have amount of various approaches to attacking the problem of “dropout rates”. Because this study has shown that there are a vast amount of reasons as to why a student can become at-risk, such as coming from a family of low socio-economic status, student is on drugs, student is surround by delinquent peers, and more, focusing curriculum that beholds motivational concepts within it appears to be the variable that educators can control. The current intervention program is similar to a “credit recovery” class (meaning all students do each day is log on their computers and do class lessons on a software program to make failed credits). My proposal aims to apply that aspect but at a much more minimal level. Instead, I plan to include the following supports in my intervention proposal:

- Curriculum will cover aspects that are intended to motivate the students.
- The program will be an interdisciplinary curriculum that engages students and teachers in an interactive learning process.
- Relate to the Delano High School student by helping them develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to be successful.
- Allow students to examine their own lives and teach them how to make reasoned and researched goals for their future.
- Show the student that there are self-investing alternatives to college
- Assist students in recovering freshman credits that were not earned in the prior school year.
- Assist students will their current class loads.
- Build on character counts values.
- Parental Involvement.
- Introduce guest speakers that are qualified to speak on behalf of:

- A curriculum topic
- A specific career (police officer, correctional officer, fireman, lawyer, doctor, etc.)
- Motivation
- Life choices
- Military, or a form of post-secondary school
- And other topics that are beneficial to at-risk youth.

Chapter 3 Program Proposal

In this chapter the researcher will propose a vastly improved intervention program for at-risk 10th graders at Delano High School in Delano, CA. Before that, the researcher will explain his observations of the intervention program that was in place for 2013-2014 school year.

Delano High School is one of four high schools in Delano. Being that it was the first high school to have been raised of the four, it has put pressure on itself to lead all schools in all areas of education. One of the current focuses for Delano High administration is to lead all other schools in reducing its dropout rate to zero. Delano High School's dropout rate for the 2011-2012 school year was 2.7% while the average for California high schools was 13.1% (Delano.org, 2014). With an outstanding low dropout rate, the dropout problem appears absent but Delano High School is committed to excellence and outstanding service to the community it serves.

Observations

The attempt to reduce Delano High School's dropout rate and getting at-risk students to believe in the value of a diploma is noble. Delano High School administration for the 2013-2014 school year used funds to start an intervention program that focused on at-risk incoming 10th graders. These students failed one or more freshman classes and/or were recommend by a counselor, teacher, or an administrator to be enrolled in the intervention program. With permission from Delano High School administration, the researcher was allowed to observe the intervention program with the intention of making suggestions on how to improve its current state. Having spent more than 160 hours of observations, here are the researcher's findings:

- There were three different teachers who taught the intervention course. Each class averaged between 9-17 students. Only one intervention class was going on each period so the five periods of intervention were divided throughout the day (about 90 10th grade students participated for the 2013-2014 school year). .
- The current intervention model was designed with good intentions. The structure of the program included a mix of curriculum. The regular school week was planned like this but was able to change if the instructor needed it too:

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
A-	Career	A-	Career	A-
Plus	Choices	Plus	Choices	Plus

- Teachers and students were provided the Career Choices curriculum and were expected to use it twice a week. Teachers were asked to use the A-Plus software (online credit recovery program to make up for freshmen courses previously failed) three times a week. Intervention instructors were also asked to bring in guest speakers as they pleased. For example, they could schedule a correctional officer, or lawyer to speak to the students in regards to their career and about making smart choices.

Areas of Weaknesses within the Program:

- The structure of the intervention program was not consistent and did not allow the students to fully grow with the curriculum (See appendix

B –chart). There was no set structure as to how the program should be conducted. Much of the curriculum was never touched because the focus of really emphasizing the Career Choices philosophies was not clear to the educators in the beginning. Furthermore, two of the three educators did not complete any prior training of the curriculum and did not understand how to fully teach Career Choices. Instructors never utilized the My10yearPlan.com component and did not access the full content that the Career Choices curriculum had to offer.

- Intertwining the A-Plus program with the Career Choices curriculum took away from the focus and teachings of the curriculum since students immediately believed they were in a credit recovery. Students also disregarded the Career Choices right away because it didn't help them earn back their freshman credits. This caused the students to become disengaged when Career Choices was being taught.

The A-Plus program also served as an inconvenience for the instructors because:

- a) Instructors initially had no training on A-Plus. Instructors assumed the program was easy to navigate and that the program would teach itself.
- b) Students were not trained on note taking and how to be successful in the A-Plus program.
- c) Students often passed A-Plus lessons by repeating the lesson numerous times by guessing on answers until they passed it. Students would often and repeatedly ask the instructor for help on a test question in subject

matters that the teacher was not proficient in (ex: Biology, Art, Health, etc.). Students gained nothing from this.

- d) The A-Plus software would crash (log students out unexpectedly) during tests and the students would become discouraged and give up.
- Another finding is that students often came unprepared to class. They usually came with no back pack, no pens/pencils, and no paper. The at-risk student who consistently performs this behavior either can't afford the necessary school supplies or, has yet to see the value in their high school diploma. Every day, one or more students would have to be provided with the necessary school supplies. Often the educators did not possess enough supplies to provide for them all. The class lacked quick access to classroom supplies such as crayon, color pencils, scratch paper, pencil-sharpener, printers that linked to the student computers, extra pencils/pens, staplers, and other basic classroom supplies.

Other findings that need to be addressed are that:

- Students would be enrolled into the class half way when the school year was 75% done. The student gains little from this action.
- The classroom set up appeared very bland and uninviting. Much of the posters and articles appeared outdated and irrelevant. The classroom lacked a motivational atmosphere.
- The intervention class was combined with In-House (where kids who get in trouble during the school day are put). This caused major classroom

disruption because now the teacher has to watch two sets of kids and cannot devote their full attention to the intervention class. Therefore, if the teacher wanted to send a student to the office with a referral, they would have no place to go because the intervention class would be the designated area for students who got in trouble.

- New students would be enrolled into the class throughout the year. This posed two issues. 1.) They were behind coursework and had to play catch up, and 2.) They posed a threat to the class culture that the educator created at the beginning of the semester. In one instance, a student came in with his negative behavior and would disrupt the positive class atmosphere that the teacher worked hard to build. Kids who were already in the intervention would sometimes respond to the new student's behavior by participating with them.
- In each class, there was a handful of students that did not possess the necessary academic skills to perform basic level task work. One sophomore did not know their times tables. The instructor would often give much of their time to independently help the struggling student neglecting the rest of the class.
- The name of the class "Intervention" gives off negative connotation to the student. The student who finds out that they are in a support class because of the grades will feel stigmatized. Students who are possessing such an attribute are different from others in ways that are undesired and disgraceful. The stigmatized individual is "reduced...from a whole and

usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). Stigmas when observed by a majority group member, can lead to labeling, and stereotyping only furthering the reinforcement of the student thinking they are not smart, are a bad kid, or etc. In the case of an at-risk student, a class labeled as “Intervention”, it is important that the class name be changed to a more positive and non-stigmatizing name.

Rationale

The rationale for the proposed program is to “properly” and “effectively” implement a highly efficient and effective curriculum that will motivate at-risk students to stay on track and not drop out of school. The program will help at-risk students see the value in a high school diploma and will provide them with lifelong skills that the student can use through the rest of high school and after. The proposed curriculum will become more than just a class in which students can make up credits. It will be fully implemented and address all of the rationales by using a curriculum that contains interdisciplinary strategies that attempts to redirect the path of an at-risk student towards the life with success.

Program Proposed- “Success 101”

The name of the proposed program will be called Success 101. About 90% of the proposed program will be originating from the Career Choices and 10-year Plan curriculum. Created by Academic Innovations, the Career Choices and 10-year curriculum is:

“An interdisciplinary curriculum that engages students and teachers in an interactive learning process, helping them develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to successfully: examine their own lives, explore and evaluate

a wide range of education and career options, and make reasoned and researched goals for their future” (2014).

Career Choices curriculum is great for at-risk high school students because it will help them see the value in obtaining a high school diploma. Furthermore, it will get them to ask themselves the following questions:

- Who am I?
- What do I want?
- How do I get it (2014)?

The curriculum allows the students to set real life goals and while learning from the course real-life skills on how to get them. In turn, the curriculum becomes very personalized. Students will treat course work as a priority since the work is all about them.

Delano High School already has the Career Choices curriculum. It also has enough sets for the 85-100 kids who are expected to be placed into Success 101 for the 2014-2015 school year. Books and materials that each at-risk student will use throughout the year include:

- Career Choices Workbook and Portfolio:
 - a. This is textbook that comes with a guidance portfolio that contains all the Career Choices exercises that help the student layout their abilities, goals, and plans. The student can come back to and change their answers as their interests and ambitions change. This is for the student to keep and eliminates the use of

note taking and worksheets which usually end up getting lost or cause a clutter. The workbook and portfolio also work hand in hand with the online 10-year plan which enables the student to practice the writing process.

- Lifestyle Math Book:
 - a. This is a math workbook that makes math exciting and applicable to real world use. Most students never get why they need to learn algebra or trigonometry. The Lifestyle Math book gets students apply math to their everyday real world understandings such as budgeting, calculating net income from gross earnings, student loans, insurance deductibles, and more.
- Possibilities: A Supplemental Anthology
 - a. This is a book that is supplementary to the rest of the Career Choices curriculum. Possibilities is the language arts component that links poetry, short stories, and essays to specific lessons in the Career Choices context. It is also useful in regards to team teaching.

In addition, students will also have access to the Career Choices online program.

- My10yearPLAN.com:
 - a. Each student will have their very own access to this website in which they will enhance their textbook experiences, giving the computer a role that teaches beyond a typical online program (lacks interaction) and acts as a personal mentor. The online 10-

year plan is a system that guides, prompts, and helps the at-risk student with good decision making skills that will follow up with the development of a 10-year career, education, and a life plan and portfolio.

To make sure Success 101 is a triumph, the following implementations must be in place to make the course run smoothly.

- Success 101 is intended for incoming 10th graders who failed one or more freshman courses. Allowing the student to try one year of high school without any intervention is a strong indicator of whether the student will survive the rest of high school or not.
- Success 101 will be its own class lasting one period long (avg. 56 minutes).
- Success 101 will last two semesters long (one full school year). Once a full year is done, the student will be unenrolled but will maintain their online access with Career Choices to continue their 10-year plan. Staying with the 10-year plan ensures follow through and serves as a reminder to the student of what they said they would do to achieve their goals. It serves to keep them engaged with their newly acquired life skills and to stay motivated as they pursue their goal(s).
- Class size will range between 9-15 students. Smaller class sizes are more suitable for at-risk students since they will need more individual help. According to the National Education Policy Center, class size matters. Class size is one of the most-studied education policies, and an extremely rigorous body of research demonstrates the importance of class size in

positively influencing student achievement. Smaller classes are particularly effective at raising achievement levels of low-income and minority children (Schanzenbach, 2014). The average typical Delano High School student will be from a minority decent and low-income. Therefore, it is crucial that we keep class sizes for Success 101 to a low.

- The educator in charge of Success 101 will need to be qualified and knowledgeable in the Career Choices curriculum. Several teachers who taught intervention for the 2013-2014 school year did not possess the training necessary to teach the Career Choices curriculum. This caused current intervention students to not fully reap the benefits from Career Choices. The program will not succeed if not taught and handled correctly.
- Career Choices needs to be taught by enthusiastic educators. The type of teacher that the at-risk student will need will require an individual with a high level of energy and who sincerely approaches the student having their best interests in mind. Studies show that effective teachers of at-risk and highly mobile students meet affective needs by caring for students, being fair and respectful toward students interacting with students, being enthusiastic and motivating, having a positive attitude toward teaching, and being reflective practitioners (Stronge, 2007). Therefore, careful consideration should go into the decision of what type of teacher should teach this course.
- Assign each intervention period with two teacher's aides. They must be of high character, excel in their academics, and be mature, responsible senior

students who really want to help troubled youth. Having aides is a good way to give each students more individual help with lessons and directions. Because some students will need more help than others, educators can use their aide to help clarify a topic so that the teacher does not neglect the rest of the class by devoting most of their time to one students question for help.

- The current classroom design works for Success 101. It is two classrooms combined with a door in the middle that will give one access to either side. One side is designed for traditional classroom teaching. The other side is the computer room which allows the student to work on their 10-year program, to conduct research online, or perform other technological activities as requested by the educator.
- Classroom atmosphere is very plain and needs to be decorated. The theme of Success 101 is motivation. Therefore motivation posters need to be put up, posters/flags/pictures of colleges, tech schools, military, and other institutions need to be on the classroom walls.
- The classroom will need to contain an ample supply of materials such as scratch-paper, color crayons/pencils, extra pens/pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners, calculators, printers, printer paper, and other necessary classroom supplies as needed.
- The A-Plus software must not be incorporated until the end of the school year. Using the program early in the year takes away focus from the Career Choices training.

- The need for intervention courses will depend on the number of students who fall in the “at-risk” category. For the 2013-2014 school year, Delano High School had 5 class periods of intervention with three different teachers teaching it. Each class contained about 11 to 17 students.

Career Choices Successes through Data Support, Testimonials, and Reviews

Having been tested and implemented in the classroom setting, Career Choices curriculum has been catching wind and still continues to become a popular intervention program till this day. Schools that have used the Career Choices & 10-year Plan curriculum have reported back to Academic Innovations of their great success. On www.whatworkscareerchoices.com, Academic Innovations reported that:

- Grace King High School in Metairie, Louisiana reports that after using the Career Choices curriculum, the percentage of freshmen failing one or more classes dropped from 48.8% to 9% within one year.
- After using Career Choices for a year, Rahway High School which is located in New Jersey had their freshmen failure rate dropped from 50% (2010-11) to 35% (2011-12). For its impressive achievement, Rahway High School was awarded by New Jersey Monthly magazine (August 2012) as one of the top 10 most improved high schools in New Jersey.
- Poughkeepsie High School of New York was a school that was usually being cited and labeled as a constantly underachieving school. After one year of use, the first graduating cohort to have the Career Choices class had achieved a graduation rate of 63% in 2011 and the second cohort improved to 83% in 2012.

- Indio High School of California used Career Choices curriculum calling their class Success 101. Towards the end of the year, freshmen who took Career Choices were largely responsible for 49 of the school's 65 point APA (Academic, Performance Index) which increased within that first year. What's also unique about Indio High School is that the student population they serve is largely Hispanic just as Delano High School is.
- Carroll High School of Ozark, Alabama introduced a Freshman Academy in 2011 to help freshmen make a successful transition into high school and build meaningful relationships. In their program they used Career Choices curriculum that helped their number of students failing a class decreased by 50% while the number of students who lost credit due to absences dropped by 35%.
- A rural district, Robeson County Public Schools (Lumberton, North Carolina) introduced a mandatory Freshman Transition program using Career Choices in all seven high schools to help curb a serious dropout problem. A 23% decrease in the number of dropouts was observed between 2010 and 2011.
- When Bobby Cunningham started as principal of McCormick High School in South Carolina, the school had one of the highest dropout rates in South Carolina. He chose to introduce *Career Choices* to all grades at once, and the results were staggering. "After one year, McCormick High School moved from a 'below average' school to one of two 'excellent' schools in South Carolina," Cunningham said. The results from the second

year, shown below, were even more impressive: The rate at which freshmen were retained fell from 10.8% in 2006 to 1.5% in 2008.

- McKay High School (Salem, Oregon) in 2011-12, only 3 students dropped out, making McKay's dropout rate the lowest in the state among schools with more than 750 students (2014).

Because Career Choices has caught wind, many high schools across the nation have put their students through Career Choices. The award-winning curriculum has been used in more than 4,300 schools (2014). The curriculum has even become very popular with California high schools. High schools in California that are currently implementing the Career Choices curriculum include: Foothill High School, Indio High School, Mt. Diablo High School, Silverado High School, Desert Hot Springs High School, Hanford West School, Carpentaria High School, Antioch High School, Chaffey High School, McKinleyville High School, Norte Vista High School, and North Valley Charter Academy (2014).

Career Choices has not only proven itself to be effective and popular amongst school officials, but has also received high reviews from teachers and students who have used the program. Testimonials provided by the teachers who implement the program and students who participate are many. In regards to their Career Choices has reported the following testimonials on their website www.whatworkscareerchoices.com:

“This class has given me an opportunity to see how my future life might be, and what I need to do to accomplish what I want. This class has also opened my eyes to know what career I want and not end up somewhere I don't want to be or do.” - Alejandra, Indio High Student.

“Everything we do here is going to help us later on in our lives. Right now we are doing the budgets, it’s pretty fun because it’s like your dream life, like everything you want, the best car the best house, everything you want even the best wife. But everything seems so real and it makes [me] think that I could do something like that in my life.”~ Jarrod, Indio High Student (2014).

Career Choices curriculum has also shown how powerful it can be in the student motivation sector as well. Students have said:

"I find this class to be very useful and inspiring. It opens my eyes and really makes me think about my future." - Carpentaria High Student.

“I know how to get what I want by trying hard and never ever giving up. For as long as I live I will never give up on my goals. You have to work hard and I plan on doing that.”- Alleea Carpinteria High Student

"This class motivates me not only in being a better person but by trying hard in school and everything I do."- Christian Carpinteria High Student (2014).

Teachers who have used and witness the program also had good things to say about Career Choices and how it has motivated students:

"[The curriculum] engages students and can be applied to what is real in their life. I just started using the curriculum this quarter. I already love it... [The] kids are engaged."- Sheryl M. English/Social Studies Teacher, Broadmoor Technical School Shawnee Mission, KS.

*"Students were actually seeing that there is a purpose for being in school...
The Career Choices curriculum allows students to be more alive and alert,
which is motivating and enjoyable to me." - Doug C. Communications
Teacher, San Gabriel High School, San Gabriel, CA (2014).*

Reviews & Awards

The Career Choices curriculum has also received credible reviews from researchers and government agencies. The Career Choices website www.whatworkscareerchoices.com holds information that displays reviews and critiques from outside sources. The website reports that the U.S. Department of Education states that Career Choices is a "Promising Intervention" curriculum. In support, the U.S. Department of Labor has described Career Choices as a program that models "Best Practices." Finally, the Gender Equity Expert Panel felt that there was sufficient, consistent preliminary teacher and student self-report evidence, and anecdotal evidence to rate the effectiveness of this program as "good" (2014). ACTE's Techniques magazine gives another prestigious review by stating that "Career Choices received a Promising Intervention Award from the U.S. Department of Education for its effectiveness in reducing dropout rates and supporting higher achievement in reading and math" (2014).

Resources and Personnel Involved

Success 101 program is very feasible in that it will cost little to nothing to fund and implement. Delano High School already has the Career Choices curriculum purchased. Assuming that the same amount of students are put into intervention for the

2014-2015 school year (about 90 students), four books will be required for the program, and Delano High School has enough material to last another three cohorts of at-risk tenth graders. No additional class books or materials will be needed since the school can provide for materials and supplies when requested in a timely fashion. Furthermore, teachers who are assigned to teach Success 101 must be trained at a Career Choices Work Shop prior to teaching the course. Academic Innovations provides the trainings free and will not take away revenue from the school bank.

Computers and the A-Plus computer software licensing has already been purchased as well and will not include any additional costs. If granted the student printer, the school can supply an older printer that is not in use.

The intervention team in my program will be the same as the current. Personnel involved will be the intervention teachers, one administrator who serves as the overseer of the intervention program, and a counselor who is in charge of the 10th grade class of that year (Note: each graduating class has one counselor that has seen over them for four years). Because no drastic changes are being made to the intervention team, no extra personnel will be needed to support the proposed program. The only addition of personnel to the intervention classroom is the two teachers' aides. This will not incur any costs because any senior student who is on track to graduate may use one period to be the aide of any teacher.

Processes of Running Success 101

Success 101 will use a pacing guide that requires 145 hours of Career Choices curriculum which could be found on the Career Choices website (www.careerchoices.com) using the four books mentioned (2014). We will follow a pacing guide that will use up about 75% of the school year (about 75% of school year). Unlike like the 2013-2014 school year, Success 101 will not

incorporate the A-plus program until the 145 hour pacing guide is complete. This leaves the instructor and students a little more than 25% of the school year to complete one or more courses on the A-Plus software to make up classes that they failed freshman year. Throughout the school year, time allows for six guest speakers. They will be scheduled as the year goes on in no particular order.

Implementation & Program Management

Implementation of Success 101 will be an easy transition. Meetings through the summer before the 2014-2015 school year will take place amongst Delano High School administration, counseling department, and the intervention teachers. Once the new structure of Success 101 has been agreed upon, intervention teachers are expected to meet once (30-min period) to go over classroom issues, suggestions, and discussions regarding the Success 101 class.

The main overseer of the programs will be the intervention assigned administrator and counselor. The counselor is important because he/she will be more knowledgeable about the at-risk student than the Success 101 teacher and administrator. The counselor can provide information that the teachers can use to accommodate the at-risk student. Furthermore, the counselor will use the My10yearPlan.com to keep track of the students' goals and objectives throughout their high school career. If a student is ever called in the office for academic/behavior disciplinary action, the counselor can reflect to the student their 10-year plan using it as a reminder for the student to regain their focus and get back on track.

In order for Success 101 to succeed, the intervention must collectively work effectively as a team. Members must be on the same page and communication must be a norm amongst team members. Instructors who are assigned to teach Success 101 must stay true to the lesson plans and pacing guide provided with the Career Choices curriculum. Not following the lesson plan

schedule will disable the full effect of the curriculum. Summary of the proposed programs accommodations are:

- In the case of an at-risk student, a class labeled as “Intervention”, it is important that the class name be changed to a more positive and non-stigmatizing name. Success 101 gives off a more positive label.
- Educators teaching Success 101 should be a high-quality teacher, very enthusiastic, energetic, positive, genuinely caring of the students best interests, and a good role model figure that students will likely respect and potentially look up too.
- Instructors will follow the rigorous 145 hour program followed by the A-Plus software. Motivational guest speakers will be intertwined with the Career Choices lessons.
- Since students are put the intervention class because of their poor academic performance, it is likely that they will need individual help to complete an assignment. Because the class will be filled on average with 14 at-risk students, it is essential that the educator be supplied with two teachers’ aides (senior students who qualify) who are academically proficient, genuinely want to help others,
- Supplies of paper, pens/pencils, color crayons, and other necessary school supplies must be stored in the classroom. Students who don’t bring the necessary supplies often use that as an excuse not to do the work. Having supplies ready for them will void that excuse. This will come at no expense since a portion of funds is reserved for school supplies at the request of the educators.

- Students will utilize their My10yearPlan.com since it is included in the 145 hour curriculum.
- Students should be entered into Success 101 in cohorts. A student should not be thrown in Success 101 when it is at the half way point. Success 101 will last one year (two semesters).
- Students being disciplined by the school should be put into an “In-house” orientated class that aims at disciplining the student. Not into Success 101.

Chapter 4-Alternative Selections

Criteria for Recommending Alternatives

The current intervention model, along with my proposed intervention model, will be compared based on the criteria of effectiveness and feasibility. The criteria effectiveness means if the programs can achieve the goal of increasing the graduation rates of “at risk” 10th graders at Delano High School. Feasibility is about the possibility of the programs to achieve that goal.

The Criteria of Effectiveness

The current intervention model resembles more of a credit recovery program that tries to input the Career Choices curriculum when it can. Although the Career Choices was intended to be the bases of the program, the A-Plus program appeared to take over because its effects were more objective and instant meaning if a student can pass a class on A-Plus, then the student was catching up on credits. This created an instant gratification effect between both the instructor and the student because of the belief that if the student completes courses, then instructor thinks they are doing well for the student and the student believes they can graduate high school now because they are caught up with classes. Basically, passing a class (which often took 1 month to 2 months on A-Plus) was equivalent to immediate success for both parties. This form of instant gratification is linked to emotional fulfillment, so instant gratification implies that a person does not have to wait at all to feel fulfilled.

In contrast, the proposed intervention model seeks to provide the student delayed gratification, meaning the rewards of the program will not be seen immediately by the students and instructors but later. Because the at-risk student will only have been a 10th grader while in Success 101, instant gratification tactics such as letting the students use the A-Plus program for

most of the year will not significantly help the student in achieving the goal of a high school graduation. Furthermore, early implementation of the A-Plus system does not teach the student how to find motivation to succeed in school, does not do anything to assist the student in the development of higher academic and work skills, and does give them a foundation of motivation to want to be better students. In other words, my programs aims to get at-risk students to see the value of high school diploma before giving them the opportunity to make up credits. If students make up credits without first understanding the value of graduating high school, why it is important to excel in high school, and what opportunities await for them after high school, then the student will not go about the rest of their high school career in a motivated and beneficial fashion.

The criterion of effectiveness shows that my proposed program will more be more effective at reducing the dropout rate at Delano High School. Because my program seeks to do more than help at-risk students make up class credits, the curriculum and implementation of my program will create of foundation of successful attitudes that will help motivate the student for their rest of their high school career and life after high school.

Criteria of Feasibility

The criterion of feasibility will measure the ability of the program to achieve the goal of reducing the dropout rate.

The current intervention program very closely resembles the senior (12th graders) credit recovery class. The senior credit recovery class focuses 100% completely on A-Plus. Senior students spend all day and all year trying to pass failed courses through the A-Plus software.

Students in the current intervention program are simply in a scaled down version of the senior credit recovery class but in addition receive Career Choices curriculum.

The proposed intervention is feasible in that all the curriculum, supplies, technology, and goals are the same as the current intervention program. The only difficulty would be if school administration wants to make the accommodations and go with the program structure proposed.

Provisions for Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring Success 101 will be the assigned administrator and counselor. The administrator and designated counselor of the at-risk students will hold weekly meetings with Success 101 instructors and ask for reports regarding student behavior and progress. To achieve the desired outcome, Success 101 will be evaluated by conducting the following procedures:

- 1.) Grade Point Average (GPA) Measurement: By comparing the student's sophomore, junior, and senior year GPAs to their freshman GPA, we can determine whether or not the newly proposed intervention program improved their academic achievement.
- 2.) Graduation Measurement:
 - a. The student that the proposed intervention program is designed for is likely to not graduate if no intervention was offered at all. The program will measure its success on whether or not the intervention student graduated high school on time.
 - b. The second part to this criterion would be to compare the yearly graduation rates. For example, 10th graders who are enrolled into the intervention program in the 2013-2014 school year are scheduled to graduate in the 2015-

2016 school year. The graduation rate of the 2015-2016 entire Delano High School class will be compared to previous graduating classes before it. This will determine if we have picked the right grade in which we enrolled the intervention student, and if the program is having an overall positive effect on the school.

- 3.) 2-Year Follow Up: Students who were enrolled into the proposed intervention program, and whether or not they graduated or not, will receive either a follow up letter, phone call, or an email (some form of online contact) survey. The survey will ask the former student questions related to their current progress in life, and if they feel the intervention program had lasting impact on them.

Essentially, measuring the success of the program will involve thorough follow up. In order to see if the program is doing what it is intended too, we would need to follow all students who entered the intervention program up until they graduate high school or until they drop out, are transferred to a continuation high school, or up until they leave Delano High School.

Limitations and Unanticipated Consequences.

Career Choices offers many great benefits to at-risk high school students. However, the way the program is designed does not fully use all aspects of it. One limitation is that my program will not fully use the career choices curriculums. There are many more books involved with the curriculum but the cost to fund those extra books is too expensive for Delano High School's intervention budget. Furthermore, the program is designed specifically for incoming freshmen students. My program intends to start with the incoming sophomore students which may not have the same effect as the studies that have proven Career Choices to work. We are

also limiting the time frame in which the students can be in the Career Choices curriculum. Yes, the student is allowed online access to their My10yearPlan.com profile, but they are excluded from other Career Choices Curriculum that carries on into junior and senior years of high school. The proposed program is asking to run 145 hours' worth of Career Choices content and lesson plans. The curriculum length that Career Choices ask schools to follow is the 180 hour pacing guide.

Despite the benefits of the proposed program, there are several unintended consequences. Instructors of the proposed program will receive more micro management from the designated administrator and counselor. Having the instructors follow a more structured rigorous curriculum will come with a loss of flexibility and freedom of the instructor. This may not pose well and some instructors may opt out since they cannot control how the course is to be ran as the current intervention mode. Another unintended consequence is that down the road (4 years and up), the Delano High School will need to continue putting funds into the intervention program to replace work books and to pay for supplies. If school funds ever dry out, Success 101 may be one of the first programs to get cut. Cutting the program could be a letdown for kids who have heard of its success and have wanted to enroll into it.

Chapter 5- Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary and Conclusions

Reducing dropout rates is no easy task. Delano High School has been very outstanding in this category in that Delano High School's dropout rate for the 2011-2012 school year was 2.7% while the average for California high schools was 13.1%. Delano High School is aware that it does not have alarming dropout rates but strongly believes they can do better in obtaining their goal of having zero dropouts for the 2014-2015 school year and on.

The current intervention model at Delano High School needs restructuring to maximize its goal in turning at-risk potential dropouts into high school graduates who are college and work ready. Its heavy emphasis on the A-Plus program will not produce the long term goals of creating college and work ready high school graduates. The current intervention program is lacking in a concise and clear structure that teachers can easily follow, it does not allow the students to find motivation to develop successful attitudes, and does little to prepare the student with skills to succeed in life after high school. My program proposal requires strong leadership from administration and extraordinary teachers that will follow the newly restructured programs design and teach it to their fullest abilities. The hope is that the new intervention class will motivate them to want to learn and thrive in high school as well as to get them to want to graduate possessing high academic and work skills, develop successful attitudes, and build the knowledge of knowing how to explore and evaluate a wide range of education and career options in which they can make reasoned goals. Using the Career Choices curriculum will create these results and has proven through trials that it can. Success 101 is the answer.

Recommendations

There is one recommendation to improve this program proposal. If there was endless time there could have been an even greater in-depth study as to what specifically causes the “Delano High School student” to drop out of high school. Interviews, surveys, and other methods can be used to gather the data. Once found, researchers can link more specific curriculum to attend to the specific problems found.

In general, the program proposal will work if followed strictly and will provide more for at-risk students than just a high school diploma. It will produce intrinsically motivated, college and workforce ready graduate cohorts, who are ready to contribute to society in a positive way.

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Appendix A

IRB Letter



CSU Bakersfield

Academic Affairs

Office of the Grants, Research, and Sponsored Programs (GRaSP)

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Research Ethics Review Coordinator
and IRB/HSR Secretary

Date: 30 May 2014

To: Matthew Veloria Grijalva, PPA Student

cc: Jinping Sun, Public Policy and Administration
Paul Newberry, IRB Chair

From: Steve Suter, Research Ethics Review Coordinator

Subject: Protocol 14-64: Not Human Subjects Research

Thank you for bringing your protocol, "**Hope for All: Addressing the 'At-Risk' Student at Delano High School**", to the attention of the IRB/HSR. On the form, "*Is My Project Human Subjects Research?*", received on May 30th, 2014, you indicated the following:

I want to interview, survey, systematically observe, or collect other data from human subjects, for example, students in the educational setting. **NO**

I want to access data about specific persons that have already been collected by others [such as test scores or demographic information]. Those data can be linked to specific persons [regardless of whether I will link data and persons in my research or reveal anyone's identities]. **NO**

Given this, your proposed project will not constitute human subjects research. Therefore, it does not fall within the purview of the CSUB IRB/HSR. Good luck with your project.

If you have any questions, or there are any changes that might bring these activities within the purview of the IRB/HSR, please notify me immediately at 654-2373. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Suter".

Steve Suter, University Research Ethics Review Coordinator