

APPENDIX V – 41

High School Student Support Strategies

Freshman Academy (Summer Bridge Program) for Incoming 9th Graders

In summer 2018, the District continued the Freshman Academy (formerly Summer Bridge Program) at all ten comprehensive high schools. While any student could attend, the District targeted its recruitment to students who faced particular academic challenges, such as 8th grade students in jeopardy of not promoting to the 9th grade.¹ Hundreds of African American and Hispanic students attended and received credit for the academy. The District recruited teachers working on the respective campuses to be a part of the Freshman Academy so they could start building relationships with the students prior to the first day of school.

Organize High School Classes for Freshmen into Smaller Communities or Teams

In SY2016-17 and SY2017-18, Santa Rita High School's Success Academy provided a new pathway for college and career readiness within a unique academy model. Students participating in this smaller school community were on a differentiated bell schedule that included a Success Academy class. The District designed the class to connect college advisors and industry partners with students on the Santa Rita campus.

Pilot Program to Use 8th Grade Data to Place Students in Need of Math Support in a Two-hour Block of Algebra/Algebra Support

The District continued to implement a "double-block" Algebra 1 class for struggling freshmen, with plans to expand the following year. For SY2018-19, the following high schools have included at least one section of Algebra support (Response to Intervention) in their master schedules: Catalina, Cholla, Palo Verde, Pueblo, Rincon, Sabino, Sahuaro, Santa Rita, and Tucson.

¹ Students participated in a four-hour school day in which they received 1.5 hours of instruction in both math and ELA, and one hour of either study skills or campus orientation. The mathematics and ELA curriculum was the same as that used for other 8th grade retention programs but staff members deliver it in an abbreviated amount of time. The District designed the program to provide students a solid foundation in these core content areas as they transition to high school. The campus orientation and study skills component of the program allowed students to become accustomed to their high school site so that as incoming freshman they would have less difficulty transitioning to high school.

Dropout Prevention Specialists

During SY2017-18, dropout prevention specialists worked mostly in high schools, with some specialists covering more than one school and occasionally in middle and K-8 schools. The District assigned them using enrollment, discipline, and attendance data, and schools could request services using the Student Services Online Request for Services. Specialists supported students through one-to-one conferences, attendance monitoring, matching students to exceptional education services when needed, identification and monitoring through MTSS, and home visits. They also provided alternative options for students to complete school and engaged students with community resources as necessary. Specialists served as student advocates and liaisons between the schools and families and were instrumental in supporting the Steps to Success event.

Credit Tracking Training

As part of the MTSS process at high schools, MTSS teams monitored the credit acquisition of students in jeopardy of not graduating. During high school MTSS meetings, the teams also discussed individual students with low or failing grades to develop interventions and/or a plan for support. Furthermore, District staff shared with families the promotion/retention policies and grade appeal process. The Dropout Prevention Department conducted trainings on credit tracking with 8th grade students in preparation for high school. AASSD and MASSD specialists working at the high school level also reviewed graduation credits with students and helped students monitor their own academic progress.

Step By Step

Step By Step is an interactive training for 8th grade students transitioning to high school and adapting to the high school environment. The program covers the relationship between grades, credits, and attendance in high school; strategies for addressing credit deficiencies; and the future impacts of dropping out. Dropout Prevention and site-based staff welcomed and encouraged families to participate.

Education and Career Action Plans

School counselors, college and career readiness coordinators, and dropout specialists played pivotal roles in preventing students in grades 9-12 from dropping out by developing graduation plans and providing direct services and support to them. The Arizona Career and Information System (AzCIS) is an Internet-based program provided at no cost to public school districts in Arizona. AzCIS is designed to provide comprehensive educational, career, and occupational information to help students make more informed career and school choices. The AzCIS portfolio portal provided students with methods to develop and update their Education and Career Action Plans (ECAPs), which are personalized plans/portfolios. In SY2017-18, the District required all 8th-12th grade students to use AzCIS to create ECAPs, and school counselors worked directly with students and teachers to develop them for all students.

Students created 19,406 entries and 4,300 portfolios in AzCIS during SY2017-18 at the high school level and 3,535 entries and 1,214 portfolios at the middle school level. Entries included creating ECAPs, updating information, and adding new goals. The portfolio allowed students to enter, track, and update course enrollment and post-secondary plans aligned to career goals and documentation of the range of college and career readiness skills they developed. School counselors and college and career readiness coordinators reviewed plans and results with students in classrooms and with parents. College and career readiness coordinators acted as the point of contact at each high school for assisting students in developing the student ECAPs (via AzCIS).

Structured Concept Recovery

The District used this strategy on a wide scale, providing concept recovery as an intervention to students who are struggling with content, particularly in ELA and math. Sites used online learning tools to provide specific concept recovery lessons to at-risk students under the direction of a teacher. As the District refines its approach to MTSS for academic purposes, it is also refining the methods of concept recovery used as an academic intervention.

Alternative Schools and Programs

The District operated two alternative schools in SY2017-18—Project MORE Alternative High School and Teen-Age Pregnancy (TAP)—as well as online alternatives. Project MORE serves juniors and seniors seeking flexible web-based learning options supported by personalized instruction with an emphasis on credit recovery. TAP is a small alternative school designed to help pregnant and parenting teens finish high school. TAP provides direct instruction, credit recovery courses, and targeted instructional supports in math and reading for students who are at a high risk for dropping out of high school.

In addition, any high school student who failed one or more semester of required courses had the opportunity to choose among multiple credit recovery options, including AGAVE Middle and High School, AGAVE Credit Recovery, Edgenuity, GradLink, and Weekend Academy at Project MORE. Alternative summer school options include AGAVE Credit Recovery and the Freshman Academy program. These options provided students with opportunities to make up credits before, during, and after school; during evenings, weekends and holidays; or during the summer either in a traditional high school environment or online.