

Improving At-Risk Students' Academic Success

Sylinda Banks, Ed.D.

Riverside School Counselor Leadership
Network Meeting
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Bryant Alternative High School



Bryant Alternative High School

Program

- o High School Diploma Program for students ages 16 – 22
- o 18:1 student/teacher ratio
- o 4 class periods (90 minutes each) per day (8:00 – 2:45)
- o 4X4 course schedule – students can earn up to 8 credits
- o 2 graduations per year (February and June)
- o Services students from 12 different high schools

Services

- o ESOL – all levels
- o Special Education – resource level
- o Project Opportunity – support services for pregnant/parenting students

What do you see?



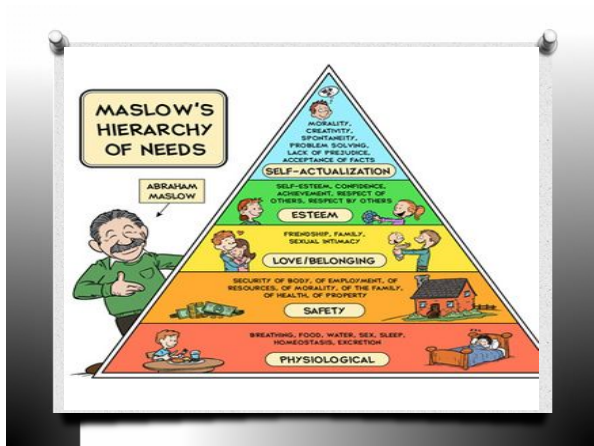
At-Risk Students

- o Academic difficulty – few credits, grade level behind
- o Excessive absences
- o Discipline or Behavior concerns
- o Other barriers
 - o Working 20 – 40 hours per week
 - o Independent students
 - o Lack parental support
 - o Economic difficulties
 - o Homelessness
 - o Single parents

Understanding At-Risk Students

Intrinsic Motivation

- o Students are products of their environments
- o Students resistance is a product of their experiences
 - o Lack of trust
 - o Provide new and productive experiences
- o Students are not mature enough to understand ramifications of academic failure
 - o A student interest is not enough to be a motivator
- o Academic failure increase low self-esteem and apathy
- o Understand the student
 - o *“Everything makes sense in the right context”*



Strategies for Struggling Students

- o Engaging School & Community Environment
- o Caring, Sustained Relationship
- o Reachable Goals
- o Realistic, Hopeful Pathways

George Lucas Educational Foundation (2016)

- o "Almost There Award" – recognized and celebrated students who narrowly missed the A/B honor roll

Brown (1999)

Engaging School Environment

- o Do students feel welcomed?
- o Do students see your school as a place they are valued?
- o Do students believe they can be successful?
- o How engaging is your school?
- o Do students want to come to your school?
- o *Do we want the students to come?*

Welcome to the Bryant Family



Engaging School Environment Engaging Students

- o **Create a supportive environment to overcome impediments to academic success**
 - o **Meeting Basic Needs**
 - o Food distribution
 - o Person care products
 - o Clothing/gift cards
 - o **Kid Talks**
 - o 1st step - Meeting with teachers
 - o 2nd step - Meeting with student and parents
 - o 3rd step - follow-up
 - o **Clinical Meeting**
 - o Counselors, Psychologist, Social Worker, Administrators, Special Education Dept. Chair
 - o Bi - monthly
 - o Minutes
 - o **By Name by Need**
 - o **Counseling Groups**
 - o **Classroom lessons**

Engaging School Environment Engaging Students

- o Field Trips
- o Cultural events
 - o Include all students
 - o Exposure to different activities
- o Birthday Bands
- o Holiday Celebrations
 - o Mother's Day
 - o Santa Workshop



Caring, Sustained Relationship

- o Maslow needs
 - o meeting needs in school and classroom
- o Discipline with Love and Compassion
- o Teacher - Student relationship
 - o "Pouring into a Cup"
 - o Most critical aspect for academic success
- o Teachers are
 - o Interested in them
 - o Expect them to succeed
 - o Listen to them
 - o Praise their effort
 - o Are caring
 - o Do I "Matter" to you?

What is Mattering?

(Elliott et.al, 2011)

- o Is the belief people make a difference in the world around them.
- o For students:
 - o I make a difference in this world and someone notices
- o 3 Components
 - o Awareness - "Do others know I exist?"
 - o Importance - "Do they see the contribution I make?"
 - o Reliance - "Do you believe in me?" or "Do you see me as a resource?"

Do your students know they matter to you?

Reachable Goals

- o Ask students "What is your goal?"
 - o Small objectives
 - o Assist with identifying steps
 - o Prepare for obstacles and practice responses
 - o Recognize and praise success
 - o Obtainable
 - o Realistic and repetition
 - o Identify a plan
 - o Best plan - initiated by student
 - o 2nd best plan - initiated by counselor and student
 - o 3rd - Initiated by counselor
 - o Only works if the student accepts that his current plan is not working
- o **BIGP - Bryant Individual Graduation Plan**
 - o Individualized pathway to graduation
 - o 1 semester and/or year at time
 - o Courses and State Assessments completed
 - o Courses and State Assessments needed
 - o Graduation date
 - o Update each semester

Realistic, Hopeful Pathways

- o Senior meetings
 - o College representatives
 - o Vocational Training programs
 - o Military
- o Classroom lessons
- o Post-secondary planning and exploration
 - o College visits
 - o 2 and 4 - year institutions
 - o Career and Jobs Fairs
 - o Career Development workshops
 - o Resume writing
 - o Interviewing
 - o Apprenticeship/certifications programs/Adult & Community Education Programs
 - o Content and Career Month

Realistic, Hopeful Pathways

College Application Week

- o School-wide initiative
- o **Monday**
 - o Faculty - Wear your college gear
 - o Where did I go to college? Flyer posted outside door
- o **Tuesday - Thursday**
 - o Each senior applied to one college
 - o By appointments
 - o Counselors assisted with application

Where did I go to college?
Bryant Staff Member
Sylinda Banks

College
 George Mason University – B.S.
 George Mason University – M.Ed.
 George Washington University - Ed.D.

Location
 Fairfax and Washington, DC

Major
 Psychology, Counseling and Educational Leadership

What advice would you give to students going to college?
 It is possible to attend college and graduate with your college degree!

School Year	Total Graduates	College/ University Acceptance	NOVA/ Community College	Military
2015/2016	118	2	66 (57%)	0
2016/2017	126	3	81 (67%)	9



Recognition Programs

Bryant Stars

- Student Recognition Program
- 4 levels of academic achievement
 - Platinum Stars** – students earning all A honor roll.
 - Gold Stars** – students earning A/B honor roll.
 - Silver Stars** – students earning A/B with less than four classes or reduced schedule
 - Bronze Stars** – students passing all four classes
- Each quarter = 4 times per semester

Program Components

- Personal Invitations delivered to each student
- Awards ceremony in auditorium
- Certificates
- Awards Program
 - List each student's name
- Recipients listed on morning announcements
- Posters placed in hallways
- Door Prizes
- Reception/Cookout

Personal Invitation

Awards Programs



Graduation Rate

School Year	February	June	Total
2012/2013	43	56	99
2013/2014	46	55	101
2014/2015	29	41	70
2015/2016	56	62	118
2016/2017	43	86	126 Graduation Rate 91%

When we look at our students, we see

There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it's going to be a butterfly."
Buckminster Fuller

Questions

sgbanks@fcps.edu
 Director of Student Services
Bryant High School
 Fairfax County Public Schools
 Alexandria, Virginia