

YDAC Task 1: Alternative Learning Pathways Committee Meeting

Wednesday, October 18, 2017

In Attendance:

Bryan Ashby (Director of CTE), Micah Stauffer (Director of Secondary Education), Molly Dugan (MD Dept. of Labor, Licensing & Regulation), Amber Green (YDAC Americorp), Amanda Brumfield (Wor-Wic, Adult Education), Samantha Scott (YDAC Chair), Andy Kitzrow (Deputy City Administrator), Theo Williams (Neighborhood Housing), Jermichael Mitchell (Community Leader), Tom Evans (Henson Foundation), Dani Walker (SBY Youth Civics Coordinator), (Aaron Deal, Pupil Personnel Worker)

Overview of the Problem (Micah Stauffer)

Issue: Wicomico County Public Schools is struggling with a low graduation rate – 82%, second from the bottom in MD. Some ideas have been discussed that would be more community-wide.

3 years ago the law changed such that the drop out age went from 16 to 17 and then last year it went to 18 years old. So, kids have to stay longer but that has created more disengaged youth resulting in higher truancy rates and/or disruptions in school and the community.

In the past, if kids dropped out, they could go into alternative programs that may have met their needs better. Now they cannot access those programs until after 18.

Question: what do we do for these children between 16 and 18 that would otherwise dropout but no longer can? How can we make them career-ready and engaged elsewhere? Transportation is also issue. Discipline required for online classes is likely not plausible either. **What alternative pathways to obtaining a degree can we offer these children?** How do we also offer needed wrap-around services for these children as well?

Discussion:

Bryan: CTE is typically 3 years. Begins in 10th grade. Recently moved to 9th grade. Bryan mentioned losing some CTE students toward the end of CTE.... 2012 CTE monitoring visit – developed a model so that 9th grade students can apply for most of the CTE programs. This past year, 680 students completed an enrollment request. Took 434. Currently the program at Parkside is completely full. 410 is the max. They pick 4 career options. Go through career exploration rotation before enter into a 2 yr program of study. Working on ways to expand this program in other high schools. Highest demand – criminal justice/forensics, culinary arts, health care programs. Have to teach on an 8 to 1 ratio. This year planning to hire a contractual RN to increase participation by 50% in that program. Had 260 students who couldn't get into CTE because of capacity. Has minimal qualifications. Has used an interest inventory and past attendance, conduct and if making satisfactory progress toward graduation as guidelines for admitting students. This is important to their success because the programs move so quickly – kids have to be ready to put in the work.

16% of students in CTE have an IEP or 504. Wicomico was only system in MD meeting diversity requirement – lots of kids in nontraditional programs. Many students in certain programs plan to go on to 4 year programs and may be unlikely to return to this area. For example, computer science.

2 quarters after graduation, about 82% are employed, military or in college (likely more but data limitations). Thus, CTE is a great program that needs more space and people to expand that students aren't turned away. Also, we are not sure that the 18% kids not graduating would be successful in this rigorous of a program.

2 groups:

1 group that is engaged but not getting into the program (240ish)

1 group of disengaged students who are not even applying (30 to 70/yr)

Are there programs CTE can offer that are not as rigorous or offer some variations? Possibly some skills in a variety of areas rather than 1 specific, inflexible pathway.

Jermichael discussed how many of our middle school kids have very low reading and general life skills. These "disengaged kids" are going to need life skills or a "life track" just to know how to function and be productive in society.

Discussed how great Telamon is but now kids cannot access their services because they have to be enrolled in school until 18.

Amanda discussed how a GED is a MD high school diploma but has a bad stigma associated with it. But, if a child is able to get a GED, their access to employment is much greater. At Wor-Wic, there is adult education and ways to work and take classes but because of federal rules, kids have to be in school, rather than these types of programs. There are a few exceptions but not many.

Discussed ways to offer this group of students GED tutoring while on an employment workforce pathway.

Molly Dugan suggested that there is a real lack of awareness of GED for the population that could benefit from it. All of those that didn't graduate last year with their class and did not re-enroll in school – over past few years – adds up to 600-700 students– (157 from last year) – MSDE data: at Worwic in 2017, 117 test takers – 50 got a high school diploma (any age). For 17, 18 and 19 year olds, 25 got a diploma. So, where are the rest of these children? Pass rate for those kids is over 90%. This is much higher pass rate than older children who take and higher than the rate for the state.

- Maybe we need to look at the kids who didn't graduate and catch them before they are no longer able to be reached
 - Outreach directly to the kids who did not graduate – approximately 150 last year
 - o Physically go to the home with a code enforcement officer
 - Possibly offer awareness and a tutoring program
 - o Use our new community centers?
 - Some of them will be able to pass it without tutoring
 - o There is a free online practice test – offer it at the community center

Aaron who already goes to students' home suggested that there are very few exceptions for kids not to be in school. They can, however, practice for the GED if still in school. When he worked with DJS, the biggest motivator for kids was having a job... is there a way to assist with getting a job while also getting a GED? Needs to be an immediate job – these kids cannot wait for the reward. Maybe they can take condensed classes online if we can offer access...

Molly mentioned that there are GED Option States – allows school system to design a program for a select population while they are still in school and design instruction for the 4 modules of the GED so those kids could get a GED at the conclusion of their senior year – does not count as “graduated”

- This is being submitted in MD currently

Conclusions:

1. We identified 3 different groups of kids: a) those who want to be in the CTE program but there is not enough space, 2) disengaged youth who need an alternative way to get a diploma or a GED, and 3) those who did not graduate and are out of school that we may help get a GED
2. We will meet in one month to discuss the requirements for a diploma to see if there is a way to develop an alternative learning curriculum/CTE program for disengaged youth
3. We will continue the conversation regarding ways to contact students already out of school and connect them with resources in order to obtain a GED

Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, November 15th, 2:00 to 3:30.