Team Step Up Program

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TEAM STEP UP PROGRAM

by
Edward V. Regan III

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ABSTRACT

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Dr. Ronald Capasso
Master of Arts in Educational Leadership

The purpose of this study was to (a) develop a program to assist the At-Risk population of Washington Township High School; and (b) to determine its overall effectiveness on student academic achievement, discipline, and attendance. The study focused on twenty at-risk students who were in the ninth grade at Washington Township High School in Sewell, New Jersey. An academic, discipline, and attendance baseline was established for each student and was monitored on a weekly basis. The results of the study demonstrated an increase in both the academic and school attendance, and a decrease in negative student behavior. Implications of the Team Step Up Program on the at-risk population and the impact on the researcher's leadership growth are discussed.
Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my wife, Kimberly, for her perseverance throughout this entire process. Secondly, I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Ronald Capasso, for his words of wisdom and friendly ear when I needed it the most. To Ann Moore, Sheryl Wescott, and Ro Farrow, thanks for backing the program and providing much needed energy and support. To James O’Brien, thanks for serving as my mentor and for providing the insight needed for an administrative position. To the mentors who unselfishly donated their time, thank you for helping our children. To the students who let us work with you, keep realizing your dreams!
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ........................................................................ iii
Chapter 1: Introduction
  Purpose of the Study ..................................................................... 1
  Focus of the Study ....................................................................... 1
  Definitions .................................................................................. 3
  Limitations of the Study .............................................................. 4
  Setting of the Study ..................................................................... 4
  Significance of the Study ............................................................. 7
  Organization of the Study ............................................................. 7
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature
  Introduction .................................................................................. 8
  Review of the Problem ............................................................... 9
  Team Step Up: A Program for At-Risk Youth ............................. 11
  Conclusion .................................................................................. 16
Chapter 3: Design of the Study
  Methodology .............................................................................. 17
  Development and the Design of the Research Instrument ............ 18
  Description of the Sample and the Sampling Technique .......... 18
  Description of the Data Collection Approach ............................ 19
  Description of the Analysis Plan ................................................. 20
Chapter 4: Presentation of the Research Findings
  What effect did the monitoring of students by mentors have on student achievement? ......................................................... 21
  Were the organizational and study skills techniques beneficial to academic achievement? ..................................................... 22
  How did the students benefit from character education training? ......................................................................................... 23
  What was the overall effect of the Team Step Up Program on at-risk students at WTHS? ......................................................... 24
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications and Further Study
  What effects did the monitoring of students by mentors have on student achievement? ......................................................... 26
  How did the students benefit from Character Education Training? ......................................................................................... 27
  What was the overall effect of the Team Step Up Program on at-risk students at WTHS? ......................................................... 27
  Impact of the Team Step Up Program .......................................... 28
  Further Study ............................................................................. 29
  Impact of the Study on the Interns Leadership Growth ............... 29
  Conclusion .................................................................................. 32
TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

References........................................................................................................ 33
APPENDIX A: Team Step Up Monitoring Chart.............................................. 34
APPENDIX B: Washington Township High School Office
    Referral Card.......................................................................................... 36
APPENDIX C: Team Step Up Behavioral Chart............................................. 38
APPENDIX D: Team Step Up Sample Behavioral Strategy Plan................. 40
Chapter One

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Team Step Up Program at Washington Township High School. Team Step Up is a program developed by the intern to infuse proper study techniques, character and emotional education, educational mentors and self-monitoring techniques for students who are considered “At-Risk”. “At-Risk” can be defined as “young people who are educationally disadvantaged, if they have been exposed to inadequate or inappropriate educational experiences in the family, school, or community.” (Pallas, 1989).

Focus of the Study

Students participating in the Team Step Up Program were chosen by the intern after evaluating four different sets of criteria as outlined by the Washington Township Renaissance program. The overall mission of the WTHS Renaissance program is to encourage and empower students to reach their highest potential by recognizing and rewarding their daily efforts. Students participating in this program did not meet the minimum Renaissance requirements of attendance, discipline, academics, and participation in an extra-curricular activity. In order for a student to receive a “Red Card”, or lowest level of the Renaissance Program, a student must have met the following requirements:
• 80 to 84.99 GPA

• No subject failures

• Participation in at least one extracurricular activity in school or the community, or other responsibilities worthy of recognition.

• No more than 2 absences per marking period without a doctor’s note.

• No discipline referrals which result in Administrative Detention, Sat. School or Suspension

• No more than 2 units of unexcused lateness per marking period

Students who do not meet all of the minimum requirements for the Renaissance program were eligible for this study. These educationally disadvantaged, or at-risk students, took part in activities that lead them to strive to meet all four of the requirements outlined by the Washington Township High School Renaissance Program. The population selected for this project were students who were entering their first year of high school. The intern has chosen twenty students to participate in this program. The students, who were chosen to participate, range from having satisfied only two of the requirements for participation in the Renaissance Program to students who would need substantial remediation and did not meet any of the requirements for participation.
Definitions

At-Risk Students - “young people who are educationally disadvantaged, if they have been exposed to inadequate or inappropriate educational experiences in the family, school, or community.” (Pallas, 1989).

Washington Township High School Renaissance Program - is part of a larger program started by Jostens in the late 1980’s. This program helps to reward positive student achievement in the realm of academics, discipline, attendance, and positive participation in school sanctioned or other community based activities. The model used by Washington Township offers students the opportunity to climb a ladder of academic success. The reward phase of the Renaissance Program provides everything from student discounts to local establishments to participation in a Renaissance Rally where students can earn recognition and prizes.

Emotional Intelligence - Emotional Intelligence focuses on the students emotional needs and addresses how their emotions affect their learning. In his best seller, Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Goleman (1995) reported that traditional IQ contributes, at best, 20% to the factors that determine life success. The remaining 80% include other factors which fall largely under the Emotional Intelligence classification.
Limitations of the Study

The Team Step Up Program was limited to a small sample size of twenty students. The limited number of student participation may not provide the district with enough conclusive evidence as to whether this project would benefit a larger sampling of students from Washington Township High School. The intern sampled students from varying degrees of academic, social, and attendance difficulties.

Setting of the Study

Washington Township is approximately eight miles south of the City of Philadelphia. The Township of Washington has a total population of over 166,000 people. There are over 59,000 households and the household median income is over $67,000. The district unemployment rate is 3.6% of the total population. The total population for children under the age of eighteen is 45,462. Eighty-nine percent of the population of Washington Township attained a high school degree or higher, specifically 30.4% of the population achieved a bachelor’s degree or higher.

The Washington Township School District has had some difficulties passing its budget on a yearly basis.
According to the Comprehensive High School Report of the years 2001-2002, Washington Township High School offers many comprehensive and diverse programs for its students. There has been the addition of many advanced placement programs for upper level students. Subject matter in the field of foreign language has been revised to reflect the developmental sequence of the language program. Literature and Composition courses replaced the HSPT remedial reading and mathematics programs to address more fully the needs of at-risk students.

The Washington Township School District recognizes a strong need to analyze standardized test score performance. Performance in the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) scores rose four points in the Verbal section and three points in the Mathematics section. The scores for the new High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA-11) include a 79.4% pass rate of all regular education students having passed the Language Arts Literacy section on the first test administration in the Spring of 2002 and 85.9% of all regular education students having passed the Mathematics Section. The New Jersey State average for each section was 74.5% which is considered proficient in the area of literacy. The statewide scores in the mathematics section demonstrated a 62.5% proficiency rating.

Students who were considered eligible for special education services at Washington Township High School received a 48.4% proficiency rating versus a statewide score of 36.3%. On the mathematics section of the HSPA-11, students received a 46.9% proficiency rating versus that of a 23.4% rating statewide.
Washington Township High School (WTHS) has had an increasing number of students enrolled since 1997 to present. Students attending Washington Township High School will begin their academic career in the ninth grade and will graduate at the completion of grade 12. According to the data, student enrollment has increased by over four hundred students in the past five years.

Students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP), regardless of placement, make up 4% of the entire student population of Washington Township High School.

The daily student attendance rate at Washington Township High School is 94.3% versus that of a 92.9% state average. The average classroom size of a Washington Township High School English Class is 21.0 students versus that of a statewide average of 20.5. The percentage of students who entered or left WTHS is 4.2% versus that of a 12.0% average. The dropout rate, or percentage of students who dropped out during the school year, is 1.9% versus that of a statewide average of 2.7%. The student suspension rate was 14.6% versus that of a 14.2% statewide. Students who were expelled from WTHS was 0.0% which shared the same average as the rest of the schools in New Jersey.

The student-faculty ratio at Washington Township is 11.8 students to one faculty member. The student-administrator ratio at Washington Township is 265 students to one member of the administrative team. Washington Township faculty hold primarily bachelor and masters degrees, specifically, 67% of the faculty hold BA/BS degrees and 33% hold masters degrees. There were no staff members who held doctoral degrees.
The average school day at Washington Township High School is six hours and fifty minutes versus the state average of six hours and forty-nine minutes. Within the six hour and fifty minute school day, there are five hours and twenty-five minutes of actual instructional time in comparison to the state average of five hours forty nine minutes.

Significance of the Study

The Team Step Up Program will work to assist students who are considered At-Risk at Washington Township High School. This study will make a contribution to scholarly research by providing information on the effect of individualized academic monitoring and character development. Students who participate in this study will see a positive impact in their academics, personal growth, and overall organizational skills. The school community will also benefit from the implementation of this program since the long-term ramifications will have a positive effect on student discipline and academic prowess.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this study is organized in the following way: Chapter Two includes a review of the literature, Chapter Three focuses on the design of the study, Chapter Four includes all of the findings for the study, and Chapter Five discusses the implications and further studies that the Team Step Up program may provide.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In the year 2001, President George W. Bush signed into effect a program that promises to leave no child behind. Students who are considered “At-Risk” are included in this legislation which causes school districts to inquire about different programs to assist these children. At-Risk youth can be defined as students who are facing one or more of the following factors: “Poverty or economically disadvantaged, living in a single-parent families, exhibit limited language proficiency, crime, abuse or neglect, geographically disadvantage and racial or ethnic prejudice” (Ferguson, 2000). There have been a growing number of children who are being neglected, abused, and ignored in our society. There have been claims by child care advocates that up to 15% of 16 to 19 year olds never reach their potential and simply become lost in society (Stephens, 1997).
Review of the Problem

At first glance, the community of Washington Township would not seem to exhibit many students who were considered At-Risk. The high school community of Washington Township has a student body population of over 3,000 students. Of the 3,000 students, the student drop out rate was approximately 1.9% or approximately sixty students. Although sixty students of 3,000 may be a miniscule amount in terms of percentages, there are still sixty members of the school community that are not being provided with educational services at Washington Township High School.

In order to service students who are considered at-risk, the intern looked toward other successful programs in order to begin the conceptual framework of Team Step Up. During the 1995-1996 school year, educators at Old Dominion University and in the Chesapeake Virginia Public School System engaged in an action research project to help assist at-risk youth entitled Project Enable. Project Enable (Mac Donald, Manning and Leary, 1999), “gave increased individual attention to students, focused counseling efforts on both at-risk behaviors and long-term career possibilities, used comprehensive approaches that dealt with more than one at-risk condition, capitalized on the relationship between self esteem, behavior, and academic achievement and behavior addressed social skills to help students to work effectively with others, involved families, and whenever possible, placed responsibility for learning and behavior on other students.” The overall curricular goals of this project included the following:

- Curricular materials that addressed both academic and behavioral needs
- In-class and field experiences that exposed students to new career possibilities and educational opportunities
According to a study by Gene Stephens, a professor of criminal justice at The University of South Carolina, the best approaches for developing an effective at-risk youth program must include positive reinforcement, mentoring, nonviolent conflict resolution, parent education, community schools programs, character education, and youth initiatives (Stephens, 1997). The Team Step Up Program includes activities and advisory experiences designed to improve self-esteem and to help the students learn appropriate behavior and interpersonal skills and ways to deal with conflict and anger.

The mission of the Team Step Up Program is to provide positive educational and social opportunities for students who are considered at-risk. Team Step up provides positive reinforcement from simple gestures from the student’s mentors to tangible rewards that the students can earn. According to Stevens, older children enjoy pats on the back, awards, and ceremonies to celebrate their accomplishments. This type of positive reinforcement will help to foster pro-social behavior and give at-risk youth a stake in our society (Stephens, 1997). Through the use of positive reinforcement, students will be rewarded for pro-social behaviors, and will learn that appropriate behavior does have positive benefits.
Team Step Up: A Program for At-Risk Youth

Team Step Up provides at-risk youth with positive adult role models or mentors. Research has demonstrated that students who are considered at-risk, usually come from single-parent homes or are left alone without adult attention. According to Stevens, teenagers left alone without adult attention are more likely to experiment with sex and drugs. The Team Step Up Program in conjunction with the Administrative Staff at Washington Township HS has implemented a program for its teaching staff to engage in the positive mentoring process of those identified as at-risk. The staff members were each given a mentorship guide and a conceptual framework of the actual mentoring process. The youngsters that participate in a specific mentoring program will have higher self-esteem, higher grade point averages, better attendance, and fewer suspensions (Campbell-Whatley, 2001).

The mentor’s role demonstrates an encouraging role towards their students and provides guidance and support while modeling effective communication, demonstrating empathy for others, and the willingness to be open and honest (Campbell-Whatley, 2001). When the mentor models these positive characteristics towards the student, a more effective relationship and mutual respect will develop between the mentor and their student. The benefit of a strong mutual respect will work to enable effective communication thus breaking down some of the negative barriers that the at-risk student may be demonstrating.
The recruiting, training and matching of mentors to students can be challenging. Mentors should be recruited either from the teaching staff or through other reputable business leaders (Cambell-Whatley, 2001). The Team Step Up Program has recruited members of the Washington Township High School faculty to mentor children. Since one of the goals of this program is to offer a sense of community to all of the Washington Township High School community, the intern felt it necessary to only include professional staff members of Washington Township.

Campbell-Whatley introduced twelve guidelines that are basic to successful program implementation. The intern used the following guidelines to find, recruit, and implement this phase of the Team Step Up Program.

The first phase of developing a monitoring program should include personnel who have direct contact with a student. In order for the mentoring program to work effectively, mentors must complement the existing academic program (Cambell-Whatley, 2001).

Research demonstrates that teachers suggest the type program that would fit their individual classroom needs by giving the teachers the freedom to assign mentor roles or to act as mentors themselves, a stronger sense of community may be developed. The use of school counseling staff will also assist in the development of a mentoring program. Counselors may act as troubleshooters in resolving problems with mentor matches, conduct orientation sessions, and assist in the training of mentors (Cambell-Whatley, 2001).

Other program staff should include administration. Administrators can assist in scheduling, recruiting, and selecting mentors. Other select program staff may include an
advisory board consisting of various school personnel, parents, and both regular and students with disabilities (Cambell-Whatley, 2001).

In terms of the actual design of the program, the designer needs to incorporate clear goals and objectives. "The program objectives should focus on the basic needs of students with disabilities such as academic achievement, behavior, communication, attendance, and social skills" (Cambell-Whatley, 2001). Another factor in implementing an effective program is defining a target population. First year programs, such as Team Step Up, should start with "no more than 20 individuals and increase in size depending on the success of the program" (Cambell-Whatley, 2001).

The Team Step Up Program is a program that was designed for students who are considered "at-risk". According to research, defining the target population with clearly defined characteristics is a must. Students who were chosen for the Team Step Up Program were chosen for academic, behavioral, emotional, and social skill difficulties. Once students are identified, they then are to participate in a series of well-structured activities and procedures.

The activities and procedures should not be lengthy in duration. Cambell-Whatley suggests that students should be engaged in activities for one to three hours per week. Mentors who agree to participate in this program will be asked to participate for a full year. Activities must be planned and organized for maximum effectiveness (Cambell-Whatley, 2001).
Team Step up incorporated activities that involve emotional intelligence, character building skills, organizational skills, and community service. Emotional Intelligence refers to a construct of skills that focus on the ability to recognize emotions in one's self and others, attach meaning to these and use that knowledge to reason and solve problems (Goleman, 1995: Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Daniel Goleman (1995) reported that traditional IQ contributes to about 20% to the factors that determine life success. The remaining 80% are part of other factors, which according to Goleman, fall under the umbrella of emotional intelligence.

The six elements of social and emotional intelligence include self-awareness and advocacy, regulation of mood and behavior, goal setting, self-monitoring, empathy, and social skills (Liff, 2000). Research demonstrates that through proactive steps, districts can help prepare students for a successful future (Ferguson, 2000). Lessons which incorporate emotional intelligence can assist at-risk students with making appropriate decisions, regulation of mood, and appropriate social skills (2000). Another intervention that the Team Step Up Program incorporated is the use of character education techniques.
According to research, school districts are adopting character education programs to teach children social skills, develop moral character, effective communication, and moral values (Ferguson, 2000). Character education must include violence prevention strategies such as mentoring, anger management, peer mediation, and conflict resolution (2000). Michael Gavin, Principal of Columbine Elementary School which is in the same district as Columbine High School, incorporated a character education program entitled Talk It Out. Gavin stated that he “helped the students to understand themselves and how to treat their difficulties” (Ferguson, 2000). Students whom participated in this program have also been noted to become more responsible for their behavior, build positive relationships with their peers, and accept responsibility for their academic achievements.

Another component of the Team Step Up Program, is the development of community building opportunities for its at-risk population. The ability to help others in the community will give students a sense of empowerment. Bandura (1993, and 1997) insists that if people believe they have no power to produce results, they will not attempt to make things happen. However, the Team Step Up program will give at-risk students an opportunity to feel empowered by helping the elderly, younger students, or students who do not exhibit the same level of success. This feeling of confidence will help the at-risk students learn their self worth which in turn will help them gain confidence and grow more assertive by helping others.
Conclusion

Research has demonstrated that a strong mentoring program combined with emotional intelligence and character education activities will assist students who are considered at-risk. In evaluating the programs effectiveness, Formative and Summative evaluations will be used (Campbell-Whatley, 2001). Research also demonstrates a pretest and posttest comparison of students grade point averages, suspensions, school attendance, and participation in extracurricular activities are also indicators of whether or not a program will be successful (Campbell-Whatley, 2001).
Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Methodology

The research design for the Team Step Up program was driven by student data that was based on four separate criteria. The four criteria included student academic achievement, student discipline, student attendance, and whether or not a student was engaged in an extra-curricular activity. The design parameters were incorporated from the Washington Township High Schools policy for participation in the Renaissance Program. If a student did not meet three out of the four criteria they were eligible for participation in the Team Step Up Program. Once a student was engaged in the program student progress was monitored in all four of the criteria through action research, progress reports, and discipline records.
Development and the Design of the Research Instrument

Participants in the Team Step Up Program were monitored throughout the developmental stages of this program. The research that was gathered was through data that was closely attached to outside student achievement. The data that was used for the identification process was found on the districts new Powergrade software. The researcher identified twenty students who were considered “at-risk” based on the criteria of student grades, student behavior, student attendance, and whether or not a student was engaged in a co-curricular activity.

Once identified, the students were monitored through the use of progress reports and through the use of disciplinary recording techniques found at Washington Township High School. The recording devices used were individual student referral cards where each individual infraction and student discipline were recorded. Prior to the inception of the program, the researcher established a baseline for each student in the realm of academics and attendance.

Description of the Sample and the Sampling Technique

The Team Step Up program involved twenty student participants who will be entering the ninth grade at Washington Township High School. Washington Township High School currently houses over 3,000 students and is the second largest high school in the State of New Jersey. Of the 3,000 students at Washington Township High School, there are over 850 freshman. The Washington Township School district is a large district that consists of middle to upper-middle class students.
In order to protect the students’ anonymity, the researcher codified the students by number and whether or not they were male or female. The student participants were monitored through the use of the Team Step Up Monitoring Chart (Appendix A) which measured the students’ grade point average and unexcused attendance.

Description of the Data Collection Approach

Students who were engaged in the Team Step Up Program were monitored through the use of the district Powergrade software, weekly progress reports, and through mentor observations. The Powergrade software provided information as to how students were performing in the classroom and whether or not they were regularly attending school. The researcher also monitored student behavior through the use of administrative discipline records, and by indicators incorporated on the student progress reports (Appendix B). Through the use of journals, the professional mentors also worked to keep progress of overall student performance in the realm of academics, behavior, and discipline.

Monthly charts indicated the progress of each student individually. The charts demonstrated the correlation of student achievement and the effects of the Team Step Up Program. Through monitoring, the researcher could oversee the students’ progress along with implementing the necessary changes in the Team Step Up Program to improve overall student performance.
Description of the Analysis Plan

Student subjects participating in the study were individually coded. The researcher numbered the participants 1-20 and indicated whether the students were either male or female and if they were regular or special education students. The researcher used the code (M) if the student was male and (F) if the student was female. If the student was a regular education student then they would be coded (R) and if the student had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) they would have a (S) in front of their respective number.

Using data from the students past performance, the researcher has set a baseline for each student and monitored that student’s progress throughout the entire program. By establishing an academic, behavioral, and attendance baseline, the researcher created a definitive way to demonstrate whether or not the Team Step Up Program had a positive impact on the student participants.

Chapter four will analyze the data collected through monitoring of the Team Step Up Program and present the findings of the study.
Chapter 4

Presentation of the Research Findings

The Team Step Up Program provided students who were considered At-Risk with proactive strategies for improving their grades, attendance, discipline, and participation in an after school activity. Through the use of teacher mentors and group counseling, there has been a dramatic increase in student academic achievement versus that of the baseline data that was taken prior to this program (Appendix A). From the development of the program to the initial reports back from the field, the findings show that the Team Step Up Program provided an effective plan for the at-risk community at Washington Township High School. Through the developmental and piloting phase of the Team Step Up Program, the researcher sought to determine the answers to questions he developed during the initial planning of this program.

What effect did the monitoring of students by mentors have on student achievement?

Once the student participants were chosen for the program, they were introduced to their teacher mentors. The Team Step Up committee decided that the teacher mentors should not be their instructor during the school day since it may have impeded their candid relationships. The relationships that were developed between the student and the mentor were left to the discretion of the mentor.
The mentors were each asked to share each student's success and challenges with the researcher. The researcher found that most students felt that their mentor was open to their needs and that if they had a problem they would be able to discuss openly their issues with their mentor. The mentors in turn felt that they could non-intrusively assist their students and could see progress was being made through the students' demeanor.

**Were the organizational and study skills techniques beneficial to academic achievement?**

The student participants were taught many disciplines which included the organization and planning of a daily schedule. At their weekly informal meetings, the teacher mentors met with their students to assist in the organization and give helpful hints in their study skills. The researcher interviewed the mentors to find out if the process was assisting their individual student. Out of the twenty mentors interviewed, all stated that they did find their students spending more time on participating in lessons and spent less time searching for assignments.

The goal setting and organizational sessions with guidance counselors have also had a positive impact on student achievement. The guidance counselors stated that the student participants were learning the process of making informed decisions. The guidance counselors added that their student sessions helped to provide the students with productive strategies for increased academic performance and coping strategies for dealing with discipline issues.
Through interviews with the counselors the researcher asked how the organizational sessions made a difference on student performance in the classroom. The counselors responded that their students were more at ease in the classroom setting knowing where their materials were located.

How did the students benefit from character education training?

Organizational meetings for the Team Step Up Program were held on a monthly basis to discuss any student difficulties or successes. The organizational meetings consisted of discussion and activities that were enticing to the student participants. The researcher observed, after the initial meeting, that the student participants were more willing to share their own successes once they felt comfortable in the group setting.

Character building activities that encouraged team work and the development of positive relationships caused the students to positively interact with one another. The character activities began with mental and physical problem solving activities.

Through the use of an educational grant, the Team Step Up staff had monies to reward the students for their positive performance in the classroom. The student participants were given rewards such as certificates, increased privileges, and tangible rewards. The students’ individual mentors were asked to join their students for the meeting. Therefore, the student and the mentors had the opportunity to share ideas, success, and build stronger relationships with other students and staff.
What was the overall effect of the Team Step Up Program on at-risk students at WTHS?

Once the initial list of students was finalized, each student was assigned a mentor and the researcher codified and established baseline data for each student (Appendix A). Through the use of the Washington Township High School Powergrade software, student progress was monitored in the areas of academics and attendance.

The Team Step Up monitoring chart (Appendix A) demonstrated a positive correlation between the students participation in this program and overall student achievement. Student grades have improved from the baseline student GPA of 68.25% to 80.54% at the conclusion of the first six weeks of the program. Student absences were also recorded on a weekly basis for each individual student. Through the use of baseline data, student attendance was also monitored through the Team Step Up Program. The research demonstrated that a positive increase in a students academic performance lead to an increase in student attendance rates.

The student who has shown the most dramatic increase was a male student (1m) whom had a baseline of 57.14 Core Grade Point Average and eleven unexcused absences for the year. Over the six week period the student had increased his GPA to 72.0% and has only one unexcused absence since the inception of the Team Step Up Program. The female student who has shown the most improvement is student (7f). Student (7f) started the program with a core grade point average of 79.2% and at the end of the initial six week period improved her grade point average to 90.36%.
Student discipline was monitored through the use of the Washington Township High School Office Referral Record (Appendix B), and the Team Step Up Behavioral Progress Report (Appendix C). The student participants were monitored on a weekly basis to ensure they were acting appropriately in the school settings, and performing to the best of their ability in the classroom. If a student received a referral to the main office, the student's mentor and the guidance staff were immediately notified and a behavior intervention plan was put into effect for that student (Appendix D).

Although the initial data seems promising for the Team Step Up Program, continued study will be needed. Chapter five will discuss the findings of the Team Step Up Program and will discuss future implications of this program.
The implications that the Team Step Up Program had on the at-risk students at Washington Township High School was still being determined. The initial numbers that were taken during the first six weeks did demonstrate a positive correlation between the monitoring of our at-risk population and their achievement levels. Further study will be needed to determine the effectiveness of the Team Step Up Program on the at-risk youth at Washington Township High School.

What effects did the monitoring of students by mentors have on student achievement?

The youth involved in the Team Step Up Program stated that they benefited from the individualized attention that their mentors have given them. One mentor that was interviewed stated that her student at first was going to fail for the year. After her intervention, she stated that the student has demonstrated such a dramatic increase in her work production that she was going to pass the school year.

The student participants stated that they have benefited from the organizational skills that their mentors have taught them. The fact that the students had their materials organized and in one place helped them to focus on the task of class participation instead of searching for materials.
How did the students benefit from Character Education Training?

The character education portion of the Team Step Up Program provided the students with an opportunity for addressing their personal issues and sharing their own personal experiences in a non-threatening manner. Through continued research, the character education component of the Team Step Up Program will evolve to include peer mentors which will address the needs of more students who are considered at-risk.

What was the overall effect of the Team Step Up Program on at-risk students at WTHS?

As the research indicated, the overall effect of the Team Step Up Program on at-risk students at WTHS was very positive. The student baseline of 68.25% to 80.54% after the first six weeks of the program demonstrated how we as educators could make a difference in a child’s life if we take the time to assist our students on a personal level.

The increase in student attendance was another positive impact of the Team Step Up Program. The correlation between academic achievement and positive attendance is clearly evident on the Team Step Up Monitoring Chart (Appendix A). In terms of the Team Step Up Programs effect on student behavior, there was a positive correlation between student achievement and improved student discipline.
Impact of the Team Step Up Program

In an era where no child is to be left behind, school districts are asked to become more accountable for their entire student population. The Team Step Up Program provided a venue for students whom do not normally receive any type of positive recognition and in turn look to negative influences to justify their self worth. The Team Step Up Program works with students not at the reactive level, but at the proactive level of assistance. Teacher mentors that were chosen for this program, acted as the first line of defense for the students. Therefore, the mentor-student relationship provided the students with a safe venue to discuss issues of discipline, academics, or of personal matters. The growth of the Team Step Up Program can positively impact the entire school community at Washington Township High School. The development of positive relationships between teacher and student, administrators and students, and administration and teachers would provide an open dialogue where everyone is working together to achieve a more productive school community.
Further Study

Piloting the Team Step Up Program in the same year did not allow enough research time to determine the true effectiveness of this program. The Team Step Up Program should be introduced to students whom are entering the ninth grade in the beginning of the school year. Therefore, baseline data could be determined prior to the students academic career at Washington Township High School and communication between middle school administration and high school communication could be further established to assist the at-risk population.

Impact of the Study on the Interns Leadership Growth

Through the development of the Team Step Up Program, I believe that I have learned a lot about motivating others, the role of the leader in a committee, the ability to cast aside ones own hubris, and the frustration and triumph of success and failure. Through the use of the ISSLC standards, I will demonstrate how I was successful to grow in my leadership skills and continue along the path of becoming a productive administrator.
ISSLC Standard 1 states that "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community." When I first created the Team Step Up Program, I had developed a vision of a program that would provide the most innovative ideas in education, and everyone would be in accordance with my plans and ideologies. Although I had developed a plan for this program that was based in research, I still needed to develop the appropriate relationships necessary to ensure the implementation of this program. Once I had shared my ideas with the school principal and the executive assistant principal, the next step was to gain the support of members of the teaching staff at Washington Township High School. To garner support from volunteers is a difficult task to say the least, but to ask for teachers to volunteer whom were working without a contract was even more difficult. What I needed to do was to develop a plan that would stay within the framework of the teachers' contractual duties, yet ensure that the integrity of the Team Step Up Program was not hindered. ISSLC 1K.

The intern developed meeting times where the teacher mentors could attend and still uphold their contractual duties. At the initial Team Step Up Meeting, the mentors were given a packet which outlined the goals and objectives of the Team Step Up Program. The intern asked for the input of the teacher mentors and let them know that it was "our program". By giving the volunteers a stake in the overall development of the program, the intern created a positive work environment where all suggestions were shared and discussed. ISSLC 1P,2P,3P
Behind the scenes of the Team Step Up Program, the intern developed the Team Step Up Manual. From the mentor meetings, many staff members said that they would like some direction as to how they were to interact with their students. Through the use of various research, and drawn upon the interns knowledge of working with at-risk youth, the Team Step Up Manual was formed. ISSLC 3P. Once the initial manual was created, the intern gave each person a copy to analyze, scrutinize, and to discuss any changes that they would like to see implemented. ISSLC 3D, 3P.

Unfortunately, I learned that the sharing of ideas through homework assignments was not the best recipe for implementation of this manual. I consequently held another meeting, made more copies of the manual, and had the participants review the manual as we were discussing ideas for its improvement. The sharing of ideas as a group was a much better way to involve the mentors in a less labor intensive manner. I believe that the think-tank approach proved to be a better way of accomplishing the goals of the program. ISSLC 3D

As the program began and the mentors were matched with their students, I felt that my role as the leader of the Team Step Up Program was being challenged. Another member of the program decided to take more of a leadership position in terms of assigning teacher mentors with their students. The member whom was a guidance counselor had the capacity to work with the students on an individual basis and did not have a fixed class schedule. My leadership in this project was being challenged, however the program was moving forward at a faster pace. Through this process, I have realized that as a member of a collective team, the leader needs to coordinate the efforts of others and to facilitate the actions of others for the good of the entire community. ISSLC 3D
The greatest feeling of satisfaction that I have felt throughout the Team Step Up process was the demeanor of the student participants once they started to have success. ISSLC 3D. The challenges that I have faced to bring this program to life paled in comparison to the hope and the promise that this program has given the at-risk youth of Washington Township.

Conclusion

The creation and implementation of the Team Step Up program not only benefited the at-risk population at Washington Township High School, it also benefited the community at large. The challenges educators face is the challenge of working with students who are apathetic about their own educational existence. Team Step Up provided the intern with the experience that improved the vision and team building that is necessary for educational change. Through continued research and development, the Team Step Up program could be an integral part in leaving no child behind at Washington Township High School.
References


APPENDIX A

Team Step Up Monitoring Charts
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**Median GPA:**

68.25  74.62  75.63  76.7  78.35  80.42  80.54

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APPENDIX B

Washington Township High School Office Referral Record
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Address:

Parent(s) Name: _______________  Home Phone: _______________

Emergency/Alternate Contact: _______________  Work Phone: _______________

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Name: ____________________  Grade: ________  Counselor: ________
APPENDIX C

Team Step Up Behavioral Chart
Student name:

Course:

Please check the following information and return to:

Classroom Behavior: __Excellent  __Satisfactory  ___ Unsatisfactory
Homework:  __Excellent  __Satisfactory  ___ Unsatisfactory
Class Attendance __Excellent  __Satisfactory  ___ Unsatisfactory
Organizational Skills __Excellent  __Satisfactory  ___ Unsatisfactory

Was the student Tardy? If so when?

Additional praise or concerns:
APPENDIX D

Team Step Up: Sample Behavioral Strategy Plan
Student name: JF

Target behavior: Student has exhibited lack of organizational skills that cause him extreme academic difficulty.

Target strategy: Mentor to meet with student a minimum of two times a week to review notebooks and student planner. Student is to present all materials to the mentor for organization. Close monitoring of materials by mentor.