Effective Alternative Education Practices for Students who Struggle

June 2018
Session Agenda

- Share student stories & data to show that dis-engaged/over-age/behavior kids can be successful
- Have participants identify belief shifts to be made at their school/program
- Identify evidenced-based practices of high quality alternative schools/programs
- Share what these practices look like at The NET
- Have participants select 1-2 practices and design shifts they could make at their school/program to align with these practices
Timing

0-10  Intro, learning goals, intro folks in the room if there aren’t many

10-20  Who our students are and what they need

20-30  Application: belief shifts

30-40  Data, research and best practices

40-60  Best practices in action at The NET

60-75  Application: design practices

75-80  Closing
Introduction

The mission of The NET is to provide struggling high school students with the skills, confidence, and experiences necessary to succeed in the education and career paths of their choice.

Meeting Needs

Raising Expectations

Training for Life
Learning Goals

Participants will...

1. Explore over-age/dis-engaged high school student strengths, growth areas, and needs
2. Learn common practices of high quality & effective alternatives settings
3. Begin designing programmatic shifts that can be made in alternative or traditional settings to better support these students
Who are we talking about?

Students are most likely to drop out of school if...

- They are truant
- They are behavioral problems
- They are academically slow
- They aren’t motivated

This is what we SEE, this is not actually what students ARE
To Be

Estar = To be = what you are right now/exhibited behaviors

Ser = To be = **who** you are in essence
Who are we talking about?

Students are most likely to drop out of school if...

- They are over-age for their grade
- They have been suspended or expelled
- They have trauma or mental health challenges
- They have a learning or other disability
- They or their parents have been/are involved in the judicial system
- They have adult responsibilities (being parents, taking care of family members, working etc.)

In Louisiana, that accounts for thousands of kids
How does this feel for a student?

I can’t learn, I’m not smart

There is something wrong with me

I don’t like school and school doesn’t like me
And yet...

They stay in school
They re-enroll when they drop out
They show up after being expelled
They keep trying

They gives us a lot of opportunities to intervene and keep them in school
What are they capable of?

Research is very clear that with the right supports, these students are able to:

● Stay in or return to school
● Graduate high school
● Go to college
● Build careers
● Grow their families and communities
● Make our cities better places
What are they capable of?

Our students already:
- Learn all day every day
- Know what appropriate behavior is
- Want to be successful in & out of school

We aren’t here to fundamentally change kids, we are here to change the school environment so that they can grow and:
- Build their academic skills
- Have more control over their reactions & interactions
- Achieve their goals in & out of school
Paradigm/Belief Shift

Prevailing but not effective approach:

- There is something wrong with these students. We need to punish them or fix them and send them back to “regular” school

Effective approach:

- If a school isn’t working for a student, we have to change school to better align with what they need.
Apply: Paradigm/belief shifts

What beliefs are your schools/programs are built on?

What needs to shift?

Identify the dis-engaged students at your school:

○ What does their day to day look like?
○ What messages is the school sending them?
○ How are they reacting?
○ How would they react if the message changed?

Write a positive “mission statement” for working with those students
8 Effective Practices

1. Small school/program and small classes
2. Strong relationships with caring adults
3. Individualized learning plan that address strengths and skill gaps
4. High expectations for academic, behavior, and future success
5. Authentically engaging, culturally relevant, hands-on curricula
6. Multiple layers of social-emotional, behavioral, and academic support
7. Restorative, trauma-informed community and approaches
8. Direct connection to students’ “real-world” futures
At The NET

What do these 8 practices look like at The NET

1. Small school/program and small classes:
   a. 150-175 students; 5-15:1
   b. Every student is known by every adult & every student knows every adult

2. Strong relationships with caring adults
   a. Highly selective staffing: 1000 Applicants; 300 screening interviews; 100 finalists; 20 hires
   b. School wide & classroom based community building: orientation, Town Hall, NET Night, circles, excursions, projects
At The NET

3. Individualized learning plan that address strengths and skill gaps:

a. Individual Graduation Plan
b. Flexible, personalized scheduling
c. Special Education, RtI, Counseling, and other supports
d. ESL, Homebound, Sheltered classes
e. Unique learning environments: Traditional, Seminar, Online, Internships, Skilled Craft training
f. Next Steps: from 4 year college, training programs, community college, job placement
4. High expectations for academic, behavior, and future success

The Stockdale Paradox:
We have absolute faith that every single student will graduate and be successful post-graduation

We understand fully the enormous challenges that each student faces along the way to that success
At The NET

5. Authentically engaging, culturally relevant, hands-on curricula

- Project based learning
- Seminar style classes
- Off campus learning
- Skilled craft training, Internships
- Design elements:
  - Essential questions
  - Learning targets
  - Performance based assessment
  - Differentiated instruction
At The NET

6. Multiple layers of social-emotional, behavioral, and academic support
   - The school is a giant RtI system.
   - Every student is assessed to determine their Needs, Strengths & Goals in Math, Reading, Behavior, and Attendance RtI.
   - Every component of the school acts as (at least) a Tier 2 Intervention. On top of that we layer Tier 3 and sometimes even Tier 4 supports.
At The NET

7. Restorative, trauma-informed community and approaches

We believe that students do well when they Can: it is a matter of skillfulness NOT motivation. Thus our job is to help them develop skillfulness.

We do NOT believe that you can punish or reward a student into good behavior. We believe that to grow behaviorally you have to know how to reflect, take responsibility, and work to repair or problem-solve collectively.
At The NET

7. Restorative, trauma-informed community and approaches

- Focus on building community rather than rules
  - What does it look like and feel like in the building?
  - "Happy kids"

- Relationship rather than structure driven
  - Oh so many conversations!!
  - Recognizing uneven growth patterns

- Rigorous reporting and follow up/accountability system
  - Daily accountability list

- Ongoing staff training
At The NET

8. Direct connection to students’ “real-world” futures
   - Internship program
   - Construction program
   - Next Steps program
Apply:

Pick 1-2 practices that you could apply in your classroom, your school, or your program
In Closing

Graduation reflection video clip
Thank you!

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