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Mission Possible: Collaborative Practice Promoting Student Success

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Mission Possible: Collaborative Practice Promoting Student Success

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Mission Possible: Collaborative Practice Promoting Student Success

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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of the requirements of
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Abstract

Educators working with underserved populations of students seek strategies that promote student engagement and success. Relationship-focused, collaborative practices can provide a framework to promote student success. In this study, I evaluated the program Individualized Student Success Plans used in five charter high schools whose focus was working with underserved students. I surveyed and interviewed administrators, teachers, and support personnel about the implementation practices of the program. This research study yielded recommendations for the effective implementation of a schoolwide initiative to promote active student engagement through positive adult-to-student mentorship.

Preface

This research study came to fruition because I have a passion for reengaging students in their educational pathways. Educators have a plethora of resources to use in the classroom to advance student achievement. Despite the availability of resources, an educational gap continues resulting in a population of students who drop out of school prior to earning their high school diploma.

Therefore, educators have the task of implementing best practices to reengage students in the academic arena. Research shows that developing positive relationships leads to student success. The foundation of the program under study was relationships. I decided to conduct a program evaluation because I wanted to understand why stakeholders were not implementing the most essential component of the program. I learned through the course of my study that the barriers to implementation were complex and stemmed from levels beyond the control of school leaders. As a result of my research, I developed a strategic action plan to address the barriers and create opportunities for all stakeholders to thrive.

Through this experience, I garnered a greater understanding and appreciation of authentic relationships. If adults at every level in the educational system develop positive working relationships, the results will manifest in the classroom with teachers and students. The results of this study showed that fostering positive relationships has the potential to create the context, culture, conditions, and competencies needed for student success.

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Returning to school more than 35 years after graduating high school to earn my doctorate degree was intimidating. I am ever so grateful for my support system, who was there with me throughout the entire journey. I had several cheerleaders including family, friends, and colleagues along the way.

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Thank you, to my sisters, Kiwanis and Chloe Scriven, for always believing in me. You two make me smile just thinking about how proud you have always been of me. I love you!

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my loving mother, Mary Hollis Scriven. Although you are not here in the natural, I know you are always with me spiritually. Thank you for your guidance, support, and unconditional love. This one is for you, the **BEST** mother to ever walk this earth.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Allow me to introduce you to MyKayla (to maintain anonymity, her name has been changed). She is a 19-year-old Black student in a Title I public high school who has missed 75 of the first 100 days of school. She was 16 when she entered high school with the responsibility of caring for her younger siblings because the family lost their mother to illness and now resides with their grandmother. MyKayla misses so many days of school because she has a part-time job, and her grandmother relies on MyKayla's monetary contributions to keep the family's basic necessities afloat. MyKayla's high school counselor has a caseload of over 400 students, so she does not have the time to devote to MyKayla to encourage her to continue her education. When MyKayla finally comes in to meet with her guidance counselor, her counselor recommends she withdraw from the traditional high school she currently attends and sign up for the General Education Development (GED) exam. MyKayla does not really want to get a GED because she always dreamed of being the first person in her family to obtain a high school diploma. MyKayla and her guidance counselor do not have a relationship with each other; therefore, MyKayla does not ask any questions or tell her guidance counselor any of her dreams or aspirations. She simply takes the withdrawal paperwork and exits the office.

MyKayla's story is one that is echoed throughout public schools across the country despite improvements in the graduation rate. According to the 2021 Condition of Education report, the national adjusted cohort graduation rate in the United States was 86% for the 2018 – 2019 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). The same report revealed that the overall dropout rate in the United States decreased from

8.3% in 2010 to 5.1% in 2019. The Department of Education in the state under study reported a 90% graduation rate for the 2019 – 2020 cohort, a 3.1% dropout rate, and 6.9% nongraduates. The graduation rate included 7.1% of students who were exempt from state assessment requirements as allowed by the Department Emergency Order in the state under study (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

In the age of accountability in education, superintendents, district and school-level administrators, teachers and staff continued to address the graduation and dropout rate in high schools across the country. Educators continuously researched intervention strategies to keep students actively engaged in the educational process. According to the state under study's website, charter schools were created to improve the nation's public school system and close the achievement gap. Public charter schools were one option available to parents. In the state under study, public charter schools were appealing to parents and students. "During the 2019 – 2020 school year, over 329,000 students were enrolled in 673 charter schools in [school] districts" (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Charter schools were charged with offering programs that address a specific need in the community. The charter schools participating in this research had the mission of meeting the needs of students who were not successful in the traditional high school setting. This network of charter schools was designed to specifically target and address the needs of students classified as dropouts and nongraduates.

One of the strategies the schools used to engage students was the development of Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSP). The design of the ISSP included developing positive relationships between the students and at least one adult in the school. Kirkman et al. (2016) cited Pittman and Richmond's 2007 research which stated, "A connection to

schoolteachers and peers leads to positive beliefs and emotions about one's learning (e.g., academic self-efficacy, self-consciousness, school-related effect) which then relates to higher academic grades and lower levels of behavioral problems" (Kirkman et al., 2016, p. 6). An adult in the school met with the student and discussed the student's academic situation and formulated a plan with the student that focused on the student obtaining a high school diploma. Each school's leaders had their own approach and implementation process for the ISSPs.

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

My purpose throughout this study was to evaluate the effectiveness in terms of fidelity to the original goal of the implementation of Individualized Student Success Plans. The rationale for implementing the ISSPs was that if students know exactly what they need to do to meet graduation requirements that will increase the probability of them remaining in school and earning their high school diploma. The acquisition of goal setting, planning, and time management skills was considered a key factor in the success potential of the student. Another factor in implementing the ISSPs was connecting the student to an adult in the school to build a positive rapport with the student. This factor aligns with current research that indicated, "School change cannot be accomplished on the shoulders of the principal alone. The support of school and community constituents is key" (Murakami & Kearney, 2020, p. 6). One prevalent reason for students dropping out of school was the disconnect between the student and the adults in the school; the feeling that no one cared. Angus and Hughes (2017) cited Goodenow (1993) who said, "Connectedness represents the students' sense of belonging in the school or classroom, or the extent to which they feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by

others in the school climate, particularly teachers and other adults” (Angus & Hughes, 2017, p. 75).

The Individualized Student Success Plans were a road map for the students to document and monitor graduation requirements. Each student was assigned to an adult in the school with whom they met at the beginning of the year to discuss their academic status. The adult and student discussed courses and assessments that needed to be completed or done again to meet graduation requirements. During the initial meeting, the adult helped the student develop an academic goal and a behavioral goal. Once the goals were established, timelines and a plan to meet the goals were created. The adult and student determined the frequency of follow-up meetings based on the needs of the student. The student and adult both maintained a copy of the ISSP.

If implemented to fidelity, using the ISSPs had a manifold purpose. Not only did it engage students in their own learning process, but it also helped them build skills that benefited the students in everyday life. Tony Wagner (2008) discussed seven survival skills in his book *The Global Achievement Gap*. Three of the seven skills correlate well with the intended outcomes of the ISSP process. Skill One: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Skill Five: Effective Oral and Written Communication, and Skill Six: Accessing and Analyzing Information are all skills students develop as they work through the creation, implementation, and monitoring of their ISSPs (Murphy, 2016).

The purpose of my evaluation was to demonstrate the effectiveness and fidelity of the original goal of the ISSP and introduce the program practices to other educators. The components of the Individualized Student Success Plans incorporate collaboration, community, and connectedness. Implementing a plan to actively engage all stakeholders

to serve the underserved population of students promotes positive outcomes for all communities. When I made the decision to become a teacher, it was because I wanted to make a difference in the lives of young people. I wanted to be an advocate for those students who did not have someone to stand up for them.

When my parents separated the summer before my sophomore year in high school, my mother moved my sisters and me back to the small rural community where she was reared. We moved from an urban, diverse school district to one that was 97% White. I was in the gifted program and taking honors courses. So when I transferred, I remained in the honors courses. However, I was the only person in my classes who looked like me. Even at the age of 15, that did not sit well with me.

I noticed several disparities in how school personnel treated minority and majority students. I did not feel like I had a voice at that time. But, I purposed in my heart that I would one day be able to fight for those who could not fight for themselves. I thought I would do that by becoming an attorney.

After graduating high school, I entered a four-year university as a political science major. That did not go well. I hated the coursework. I met with an advisor at the university and her advice to me was that not all students are cut out for a major university, and I should consider a community college. Unfortunately, I dropped out and started working full-time. I did return to the university seven years later as a secondary English education major and graduated with honors. My fight was back, and I was determined to be a voice, an advocate for those who needed someone in the educational system to fight for them.

Providing fellow educators with a roadmap to create pathways to success for underserved students has the potential to change the trajectory of the lives of many young people. Providing practical tools to educators that they can implement without exorbitant budgets or hours and hours of professional development is needed. Working towards creating an educational system that embodies and practices equitable, supportive access for all students benefits society.

Rationale

I chose to evaluate the effectiveness of the Individualized Student Success Plans because schools in the network under study used them to varying degrees. Some schools implemented the ISSPs for the current school year's cohort of intended graduates and not the entire student body. Some schools did not include the students in the process of the ISSP. Instead, they created the ISSP as a tool for the adults to use to determine the proper scheduling of the students. One of the schools did not use the ISSP for any of the students.

Promoting student success is paramount in education. Implementing processes and best practices that actively engage students in the educational process continues to be a hallmark of successful schools. According to Fullan and Quinn (2016), "In all cases, it is essential to build clarity of the learning goals, build precision in the pedagogical practices, and to foster collective capacity building to mobilize a consistent shift in practices" (p. 81). Using the ISSPs is one vehicle the school personnel can implement to create clarity of learning goals for the student. According to Duckworth (2016), "Grit is about holding the same top-level goal for a very long time" (p. 64). Helping the student

establish the top-level goal along with mid-level and lower-level goals builds hope and improves the probability of success for the student.

As Chief of Human Resources and Programs for a charter school educational service provider, I worked closely with five principals of public charter high schools. The schools were dropout prevention/dropout recovery schools. The students came to these schools because the traditional high school setting did not work for them. Some came directly from conventional high school, while others did so because they had dropped out and discovered they needed a high school diploma. The work the educators did at these schools was not easy. First, they had to reengage the student in the education process because more times than not the student was met with failure in the school system. While educators were building positive relationships with the student, they were also making the students confident in their ability to be successful in school. Implementing the ISSP with fidelity had the potential to re-engage the student in the educational process immediately. From the onset, the student would be paired with an adult in the school who cared about them and wanted to see them be successful. My passion was helping students succeed. I believed involving students in the process of setting goals, developing a plan to meet those goals, and encouraging the students along the way to achieving their goals created an environment conducive to learning.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the Individualized Student Success Plans was essential to all stakeholders because if it is a tool that promotes student success, it is a tool that can be replicated and used in any school. Charter schools like those under study address a specific need in districts across the country – the graduation rate. The graduation rate in the state of the schools under study had significantly improved from

2004 to 2020, 59.2% to 90%, respectively (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The increased enrollment in charter schools had positively impacted the graduation rate across the state. However, the graduation and dropout rates were calculated differently and could be deceiving. According to the state's Department of Education website, the state's graduation rate in 2019 was 86.9%, and the dropout rate was 3.4%. "Overall, Black and Hispanic students continue to lag White and Asian students in the analysis on graduation rates for 2018-19. And low-income kids and students with disabilities continued to fall below the state average" (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The demographics of all five of the schools under study were primarily the students who made up this group who were still not graduating at the rate of White and Asian students.

Analyzing the effectiveness of the ISSPs, when implemented to fidelity, could provide the data to support dropout prevention/recovery charter schools because of an increased graduation rate at those schools. Discovering the practices that yield positive results and sharing those practices can close the achievement gap, increase the graduation rate, and decrease the dropout rate. The local school district where a charter school operates is the authorizing agency, and, as such, the district's overall data includes the charter school's performance. The data of all districts across the state comprise the state's rating compared to other states in the U. S.

Throughout my career, I have always gravitated toward the students who needed the most support. Support was not just academic. Sometimes it was moral support or social-emotional support. My classroom was never empty. Students from all walks of life spent countless hours in my classroom and sometimes in my home. When I became an administrator, my passion for working with and for the students needing the most

intervention continued. Leaving the traditional school system and joining the charter world was natural attrition for me. My focus was reaching the students who needed the most intervention and support. If implementing Individualized Student Success Plans makes an impact on helping these students earn their high school diplomas, the data will show it. I am responsible for sharing strategies and tools that improve student achievement.

Goals

My intended goal for the analysis of the ISSPs was to identify practices that cultivate student ownership and self-efficacy. “Any effort to encourage self-efficacy (in students or educators) has to focus on creating opportunities for individuals to achieve mastery, then provide them with evidence of that mastery” (Dockterman & Bondie, 2018, p. 1). Discovering whether the ISSPs had a significant role in reshaping the student’s attitude about school and analyzing whether the components of the ISSP were influential in giving students belief in their ability to earn a high school diploma were integral parts of the analysis. In addition, delving into the impact ISSPs had on the adults who worked with the students –and examining the role of the adult in both the process of the ISSP and the educational environment provided information to help build capacity in personnel.

The goals directly related to improved student learning because they aimed to promote active student engagement, a collaborative partnership between the school and parents, and teaching students skills that will help them beyond high school. Assisting students to gain self-confidence and believe they could earn a high school diploma after being met with failure after failure would be a significant accomplishment. It was important to examine the role of the school personnel and their beliefs about the student’s

ability to learn. Angela Duckworth (2016) discussed teacher behaviors when the teacher thinks the student is talented. She said, “There’s a vast amount of research on what happens when we believe a student is especially talented. We begin to lavish extra attention on them and hold them to higher expectations. We expect them to excel, and that expectation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy” (p. 26). If teachers become more intimately involved with the students using the ISSPs and begin to have high expectations for students who have not had teachers expect them to succeed, then, according to the research, student achievement will increase.

Definition of Terms

There were several terms specific to my study, and I provided definitions of those terms here.

- Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) – To calculate the ACGR, states identify the “cohort” of first-time ninth graders in a particular school year and adjust this number by adding any students who transfer into the cohort after ninth grade and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, or pass away. The ACGR is the percentage of the students in this cohort who graduate within four years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).
- Cohort – a group of students on the same schedule to graduate (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). This year’s graduation rate will be based on the number of graduates in the 2022 cohort.
- Education Service Provider (ESP) – a non-profit or for-profit entity that is contracted by the school to provide services that would otherwise be handled by employees of the school, which include, but are not limited to, operational back

office functions and services related to the instructional design or operation of the school, in return for fees (Law Insider, 2022).

- Graduation Rate – measures the percentage of students who graduate within four years of their first enrollment in ninth grade (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The graduation rate is based on the percentage of students who graduated with a standard diploma within four years of entering high school in the state under study.
- Nongraduate – a student, retained and is still in school, attended adult education, received certificates of completion, or received GED-based diplomas (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided my research was: To what extent does the Individualized Student Success Plan contribute to students earning their high school diploma in five public charter high schools? My related research questions were:

1. To what extent is there impact when the principal oversees the implementation of the Individualized Student Success Plans?
2. To what extent is successful implementation contingent upon authentic pairing of mentor and mentee?
3. What types of professional development opportunities emerge from this research that informs the work of other teachers serving at-risk, over-aged students?

Conclusion

Based upon the data collected in this study, I planned to introduce an intervention program that promotes collaboration, community, and connectedness in turn leading to student achievement and high school graduation. Providing educators with a tool that equips all stakeholders with meaningful practices to promote student success and teacher efficacy may create successful schools. In addition, the Individualized Student Success Plans could create opportunities for building positive adult-student, adult-adult, and student-student relationships.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Addressing the high school dropout rate is important for educators and politicians. “Nearly one in five American high school students does not graduate from high school on time, if ever” (Zaff et al., 2017, p. 447). A plethora of programs from for-profit and non-profit companies claim that following their programs with fidelity will lead to student success. Yet, actively engaging students in their academic progress is a strategy that seems elusive in so many cases when examining the high school dropout epidemic. Several contributing factors come between students and their high school diplomas. Some factors are beyond the student’s control, and others are a direct result of students' choices. Nevertheless, providing an environment that promotes student achievement remains an expectation for educators. Researchers Sahin and Coban (2020) wrote, “In a positive school climate, students are absent less often, students’ anxiety levels decrease (Hendron & Kearney, 2016), and students are less likely to experience substance addiction and psychiatric problems (LaRusso et al., 2008)” (p.2).

The schools I work with serve students who have not been successful in traditional high school. They have implemented a program called Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSP). The rationale behind implementing the ISSPs is to connect students with adults in the building to assist students with developing a plan to attain their high school diplomas. They believe that creating positive relationships with students is a significant component in re-engaging the student in the academic process. Boston & Warren’s (2017) research supports the correlation between teachers establishing positive relationships with students resulting in student achievement. The program’s success includes building positive relationships, empowering students to develop goals and

strategies to meet their goals, and connecting students with viable options for life after high school graduation.

To create a more profound understanding to evaluate the program's effectiveness, I completed a literature review of relationships, engagement strategies, and effective program implementation. I used scholarly articles and books from EBSCOhost and ERIC. The scholarly articles were from psychology and educational journals.

Relationships

The central component of Individualized Student Success Plans is relationship building. “Building strong relationships with students facilitates a process of change and adaptation” (Brown et al., 2020, p. 103). Adults and students working together to create a plan to matriculate through high school and earn their high school diploma is a partnership (Brown et al., 2020). The Bonding, High Expectations, and Belief in Success Theory (Haggis, 2017) asserted that teachers set the tone for the classroom and establish academic and behavioral guidelines. This premise underscored the importance of instructional leaders creating and supporting a culture of positive relationships. Haggis (2017) asserted that mobilizing the inner power of youth can build a desire to connect with others and help create caring relationships – which ultimately can positively influence school success.

Building Trust

Creating an environment conducive to student achievement and collaboration includes building trust among stakeholder groups. Back-and-forth interactions between individuals, referred to as reciprocal relationships establish trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). These reciprocal relationships allow the parties to get to know one another, and

those interactions will develop positive or negative relationships. During these reciprocal exchanges, participants can “interact, learn together, and build trust, critical components in education systems oriented toward change” (Finnigan & Daly, 2017, p. 25). Schools operate on the premise that everyone has a job to do, and they are expected to do their job. Teachers are to teach. Students are to learn. Parents are to support their students and the teacher. Administrators are to lead and support teachers. “Schools work well as organizations when this synchrony is achieved within all of the major role sets that comprise a school community” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 21).

Relational trust is at the foundation of building collaborative partnerships to foster school-wide initiatives. Biddle quoted Tschannen-Moran (2001) who said, “Schools that build and support high levels of trust between stakeholder groups have been shown to support greater collaboration amongst those groups, including parents, teachers, administrators, and students” (Biddle, 2017, p. 1). Alvarado and Vargas (2019) discussed actions that contribute to building trust including consistency, following through on actions, developing relationships, and working together productively.

School-based administrators are tasked with the responsibility of establishing an academic environment that promotes and encourages collaboration. Instructional leaders shape the school’s culture with their leadership practices. Being cognizant of cultural differences and equity issues is paramount to cultivating an equitable school culture for all students. Schlanger (2018) noted that culturally responsive leaders build strong leadership within their schools and the district by knowing and understanding “the impact of race, power, legitimacy, cultural capital, poverty, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, language, and other factors on learning” (p. 4).

Building Capacity

Oftentimes instructional leaders are challenged with addressing preconceived notions about students and their ability to learn. Negative beliefs may stymie the establishment of quality relationships that foster student growth and achievement. Fixed mindsets and growth mindsets are prevalent in both adults as well as students. Dweck (2016) defined a growth mindset as the belief that talent can be developed while a fixed mindset is a belief that talent is innate. Therefore, those with a fixed mindset tend not to excel at the rate or capacity of those with a growth mindset. Haggis' (2017) research noted that teachers identified the need to believe that students could achieve and be successful. When instructional leaders have teachers with a fixed mindset, a transformational leadership model provides the school-based administrators with tools to implement change. Peddel et al. (2020) discussed Transformation Leadership: The ACE Model in their study.

The ACE model represents a transformational model of leadership that focuses on how leaders optimize effective change via three dimensions:

- Alignment: the degree to which leaders align staff to the vision, mission, and goals of a change program
- Capabilities: the degree to which leaders ensure that staff have access to the relevant resources, skill sets, and professional learning required to enact the change program
- Engagement: the degree to which leaders can inspire and motivate staff to engage in the change program. (Peddell et al., 2020, p. 136)

Implementing effective, sustainable change involves all stakeholder groups. This begins with school principals: “Principals showed intentionality in building relationships, which they described as essential in improving high-need schools, especially in promoting teachers’ knowledge” (Murakami & Kearney, 2020, p. 7). Likewise, when school leaders deliberately implement practices to include and invest in their instructional staff, teacher dedication and commitment to student needs increase (Murakami & Kearney, 2020).

Engagement Strategies

Successful educational programs include the active engagement of the students. However, having the adults in the building invested in the program is only part of successful implementation. Relationships are at the foundation of creating a positive learning environment, especially ones that include mentoring. Angus and Hughes (2017) researched mentoring programs and elements that contributed to the success of said programs. According to their findings, formal and informal interactions done with intentionality resulted in building positive relationships with students. In addition, connecting students to the school contributes to creating a positive school culture. “Connectedness represents the students’ sense of belonging in the school or classroom, or the extent to which they feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school climate, particularly teachers and other adults” (Angus & Hughes, 2017, p. 75).

Poor attendance is a barrier for teachers trying to develop a positive rapport with students. Balfanz (2016) reported that 6.5 million U. S. public school students are chronically absent. “Chronic absenteeism is increasingly defined as missing 10% or more

of school days for any reason” (Balfanz, 2016, p. 8). Antoni (2021) quoted Lessard et al. (2008) who stated,

Marginalized students placed at risk for dropout further disconnected and sabotaged their own educational journeys with the ways they responded to external factors like school policy and peer influence in a teering process over the course of weeks or month. (p. 118)

Student academic outcomes are negatively impacted by chronic absenteeism. School performance indicators include high-stakes assessments which are acknowledged to be increasing strain on teachers and students (Flitcroft & Woods, 2018). Balfanz (2016) reported, “Evidence from New York has shown that students who exit chronic absentee status can get back on track, with increased odds of staying in school and raising both their achievement levels and grade point averages” (p. 10).

The goal of building relationships and connecting students to their school is student achievement. Self-efficacy and self-worth may be contributing factors to achievement. Irvine (2020) discussed Expectancy-Value Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. “Expectancy-value theory suggests that students’ task selection, persistence, and achievement are predicated on two things: a belief that they will succeed and the value they assign to the task” (Irvine, 2020, p. 3). The expectations of the adults influence the expectations of the students. Rutledge and Cannata (2016) noted that higher-performing schools developed students’ sense of self-efficacy and engaged them in doing challenging academic work. The high-performing schools studied in Rutledge and Cannata’s (2016) research combined personalization for students and the concepts of social modeling and human agency. Human agency is a term used to describe adults and students sharing

ownership in influencing student behavior and future life circumstances. The specific organizational strategies included “looping, strong behavior management systems, and data-rich environments” (Rutledge & Cannata, 2016, p. 61).

Collaborative Practices

Bringing stakeholders together to work on shared goals may be a practice that frames positive school culture and climate. “Collaborative culture can be defined as the shared values, norms and practices on the matter of teamwork and communication” (Meredith et al., 2017, p. 25). Research indicates that collaborative practices in schools lead to student learning, teacher efficacy, and positive school culture. “When we work together, we create a better learning experience. Teacher collaboration positively impacts student achievement and allows us as educators to explore new territory” (Gates, 2018, p.1). Building a team of educators to address students’ diverse needs is a foundational practice to create cohesiveness. “People are motivated to change through meaningful work done in collaboration with others” (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 60).

Brown et al. (2020) discussed collaboration as a collective disposition and commitment to learning. Findings in their study noted that “participants recognized the strengths of colleagues and the importance of their collective efforts and commitment to learning... [and] how the learning community was adaptive” (Brown et al., 2020, p. 102). As a result, instructional leaders and teachers understand the value of adapting to meet the individual needs of their students.

Program Implementation

Implementing a school-wide program requires systemic processes that include intentional practices to empower stakeholders (Cockerill et al., 2018). Waller et al. (2017)

identified a positive organizational climate, adequate training, and teachers' and students' motivation as critical factors of program implementation. Instructional leaders are tasked with meeting the needs of all stakeholders on multiple levels. Ellis (2016) noted cognitive and affective factors play a role in implementing a policy or program. Leading staff and students in program implementation involve creating a culture of interdependence.

Cockerill et al. cited Johnson and Johnson (1979; 2015), who said, "Social interdependence theory identifies motivation, achievement and positive attitudes for successful functioning" (Cockerill et al., 2018, p. 15). When stakeholders believe there is a common goal, members work together to support each other to meet the goal.

Culture and Climate

Developing a culture that embraces school-wide initiatives is recognized by the actions of the stakeholders working in unison (Duckworth, 2016). Creating a culture that welcomes all students requires cultural responsibility. "Research indicates that many African American students are disconnected from the school setting because of a cultural divide between students and educators" (Boston & Warren, 2017, p. 26). A sense of belonging and connectedness to the school benefits all students academically (Boston & Warren, 2017). Sahin and Coban's (2020) correlation research found that a positive school climate with success-oriented, supportive teacher behaviors and a safe learning environment promoted affirmative behaviors with students.

Positive student-teacher relationships are commonly conceptualized as students' belief in teachers' competence, teachers' expression of care for and interest in their students, cordial and respectful interactions between the two (Barile et al. 2012; Croninger and Lee 2001; Fall and Roberts 2012; Lee and Burkam 2003),

and the ability of students to talk to teachers about academic or personal (Brooks 2010; Croninger and Lee 2001). (as cited in Zaff et al., 2017, p. 459).

Communicating the Purpose

Communication is a critical element of successful program implementation. Ellis (2016) found that an aligned understanding of the program's purpose from the district to the school level yielded successful implementation and positive outcomes. Presenting the program, the purpose of the program, and the intended outcomes of the program impact how the program is received and implemented. "Interests thrive when there is a crew of encouraging supporters, including parents, teachers, coaches, and peers. They provide ongoing stimulation and information essential to like something more and more" (Duckworth, 2016, p. 105). When leaders introduce programs, they must do so in a manner that promotes ownership by all stakeholders. Merritt (2019) noted that when school leaders involve stakeholders, multiple outcomes occur, including informed decision-making from diverse perspectives, more robust learning opportunities, and stakeholder investment. The sustainability of programs is more likely when these tenets are present.

Professional Development

Educators commonly participate in professional development. Providing meaningful professional development requires embracing a job-embedded approach that promotes shared responsibility among teaching partners (Harada, 2016). Pak et al. (2020) noted that involving teachers in training through active engagement and participation led to collaborative practices. Smith & Robinson (2020) reported that effective professional development sessions include respecting the professionalism of the teacher, the

knowledge and communication skills of the facilitator, the perceived relevance of the program, and collaborative practices over time. Educational leaders need to support teachers with time and resources in an open and encouraging manner. Pak et al. (2020) identified five features that are present in effective professional development aimed at improving teacher practice and student learning:

1. Content focus: activities that are focused on subject matter content and how students learn that content
2. Active learning: opportunities for teachers to observe, receive feedback, analyze student work, or make presentations
3. Coherence: content goals, and activities that are consistent with the school curriculum and goals, teacher knowledge and beliefs, needs of students, and school, district, and state reform policies
4. Sustained duration: PD activities that are ongoing throughout the school year and include 20 hours or more of contact time
5. Collective participation: groups of teachers from the same grade, subject, or school participate in PD activities together to build a learning community. (p. 5)

Effective professional development is inclusive and provides opportunities for teachers to be the leaders in their personal professional growth. Providing teachers with the opportunity to observe what they were taught, practice what they observed, and receive meaningful feedback on the implementation of the practices are strategies to maximize professional development (Pak et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Successful program implementation requires intentionality from leaders. Designing a program to meet the specific needs of a particular population of students yielded the Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSP). Pedagogical beliefs that formed the basis of the ISSP were relationships, engagement strategies, and effective program implementation. These factors prompted the research in this literature review. Research supports shared decision-making practices and developing partnerships between educators and families (Davidson & Case, 2018). Communicating the purpose, providing adequate professional development, and creating an environment that fully supports the program initiatives are elements necessary to facilitate successful implementation.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSP) in terms of fidelity to the original goal of the implementation. The rationale for implementing the ISSPs was that if students knew what they needed to do to meet graduation requirements, that knowledge might increase the probability of them remaining in school and earning their high school diploma. Another factor in implementing the ISSPs was connecting the student to an adult in the school to build a positive rapport with the student to create a sense of belonging. Goodenow, in Boston & Warren (2017) said a sense of belonging signifies the feeling of relatedness or connection to others (p. 27). Boston and Warren (2017) quoted Booker who said, “Lack of sense of belonging has been associated with depression, anxiety, alienation, and loneliness. Consequently, these negative feelings can lead to decreased academic motivation, engagement, and academic achievement among students” (p. 27).

One prevalent reason for students dropping out of school is the disconnect between the student and the adults in the school; the feeling that no one cared. Doll et al. (2013) reported that low expectations for a payoff to education played a significant role in dropout, which confirmed that as students go closer to the dropout stage, the hope of completing school diminishes. A final aspect of the purpose of this study was to help the student acquire the skills of goal setting, planning, and time management.

Research Design Overview

This program evaluation focused on the implementation of an intervention program designed to engage underserved high school students academically. The Individualized Student Success Plans were incorporated into the programs of the five

public charter schools used in this study. I implemented a utilization-focused evaluation approach to my study because I wanted to discover the intended users' perceptions and use the outcomes of the research for follow-up action (Patton, 2008). The goal of this evaluation was to determine barriers to implementing the ISSPs and replace those barriers with actions that met the needs of the users.

Using a utilization-focused evaluation approach required developing research questions that were relevant to the users. The research surveys and interviews included questions that matched the purpose of my evaluation. Using summative questions, I measured to what extent formative questions analyzed strengths and weaknesses, and knowledge-generation questions identified patterns, principles of effectiveness, and lessons learned (Patton, 2008, pp. 173–174). I surveyed school-based personnel to gather data about the extent to which the program was implemented in each school, ascertained the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and discovered patterns of effectiveness and ineffectiveness. Participants for individual interviews included teachers, support personnel, and principals. The responses from the interviews produced anecdotal, qualitative data that provided a depth of meaning to practices in each school (Patton, 2008).

Participants

There were four stakeholder groups in this program evaluation – principals, teachers, support personnel, and educational service provider personnel. The principals and service provider personnel were essential to this study because they were the stakeholders who would be responsible for implementing changes, if there were any, because of this study. The education service provider personnel were contracted by the schools' governing

boards to develop and provide professional development to school personnel. Principals are the gatekeepers who inspect expectations. Information from both these stakeholder groups was essential based on Patton's statement, "Focusing an evaluation is an interactive process between evaluators and primary intended users of the evaluation" (Patton, 2008, p. 180). Teachers and support staff were critical stakeholders because they were the end-users and had the most contact with students. Testing assumptions and discussing the undiscussable were essential to gather data to inform decisions (Patton, 2008).

Data Gathering Techniques

I implemented a mixed methods design of extant data, surveys, and semi-structured interviews. First, I used extant data from the state of study's website and the EduData portal. These data were public records and did not require permission to retrieve and use in my study. Second, I collected attendance, assessment, and course completion data from the student information systems of the five charter schools. These data made up the quantitative data I analyzed to compare student attendance and achievement between students with ISSPs and without ISSPs.

I requested permission from the principals of the five charter schools to survey the staff. I asked staff to complete surveys with multiple choice and open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews voluntarily. I created the survey on Google Forms. I secured the participants' anonymity with coding identifiers (numbers and letters), and I did not have their names, gender, age, or the location of their workplaces identified in any way. Nevertheless, this gave me qualitative data to analyze staff perceptions of the ISSPs.

Analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data sets provided measurable and

experiential data that allowed me to deduce the strengths and weaknesses of the Individualized Student Success Plans. I used a summative evaluation in conjunction with an effectiveness focus and an implementation focus (Patton, 2008) to study the effectiveness of Individualized Student Success Plans. The summative evaluation allowed me to describe the overall value of the ISSP, the effectiveness focus allowed me to provide data to stakeholders, and the implementation focus provided insight for future adaptations of Individualized Student Success Plans.

I collected extant data from the state of study data information portal reflecting graduation rates and attendance data from the school years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2021-2022 for all five charter schools. In addition, with the permission of the schools' governing board members, I used the district student information systems to collect course completion data for school years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021. Finally, I analyzed differences in the scores and information among the five schools.

Surveys

Surveys consisted of multiple-choice questions and two open-ended questions for a total of 10 survey questions using Google Forms (See Appendix A). I provided the participants with informed consent forms electronically. Participants acknowledged consent for inclusion in the study.

Semi-structured Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with school-based administrators, teachers, and support personnel to ascertain their perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of the ISSPs. I invited the stakeholders who completed the surveys to

participate voluntarily in an interview. I conducted nine interviews via the internet. With the participants' permission, I recorded the interviews to ensure the accuracy of the transcription.

Data Analysis Techniques

The quantitative data collected provided a historical context of extant data during the diagnosis step of the research process (James et al., 2008). I analyzed attendance records, state and national test scores, and graduation rates. I included Likert scales on the survey so that respondents could indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements (James et al., 2008, p. 107). I conducted semi-structured interviews, transcribed the responses, then coded responses for analysis. The semi-structured interviews provided anecdotal information about the ISSPs.

Ethical Considerations

My primary ethical concern was ensuring participants understood that their participation in the research was voluntary. I assured participants that their participation was completely anonymous and completely voluntary. I provided participants with a consent statement that included the name and purpose of the study along with my contact information for any questions or concerns. In addition to my contact information, I provided the names of my dissertation chair as well as the names and contact information of the Institutional Research Board co-chairs. "The basis of informed consent is a complete disclosure of the reasons, benefits, risks, and potential outcomes of the research" (James et al., 2008, p. 29). I assured those participants who volunteered to participate in the individual interview that their identity would not be disclosed at any

time, nor would their school's identity. After I conducted the interviews, I transcribed the responses and redacted the names of the interviewees.

Limitations

The small sample size of five public charter schools was one limitation. Each school served approximately 200 students with an average of 20 faculty and staff. Another limitation involved my role concerning school personnel. I served in a supervisory role in Human Resources; therefore, some participants may not have expressed negative views about the implementation of the Individualized Student Success Plans. To mitigate this limitation, I assured participants that the study was a program evaluation and not an evaluation of personnel.

Conclusion

Addressing the needs of underserved students was always a motivating factor for me as an educator. Since the Individualized Student Success Plans were incorporated in the charter schools with the components supported by research to positively impact student achievement, I wanted to investigate the program's validity. The following section details the results of my extant data and interviews, my interpretation of the results, and recommendations based on those results.

Chapter Four: Results

According to the state of study's department of education website, the 2020-2021 high school graduation rate was 90.1%. The state reported that 3.2% of the cohort dropped out, and 6.7% of the cohort were non-graduates. Non-graduates included students who were still enrolled in school, attending adult education, earned a certificate of completion, earned a special diploma, earned a GED-based diploma, or withdrew to a contracted private school. The dropouts and non-graduates totaled 20,392 students. The five charter schools studied in my research were created to address the needs of students not on track to graduate with their cohort. The Educational Service Provider (ESP) provided an instructional model for the schools to implement. One of the components of the instructional model included Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSP).

The instructional model incorporated the ISSP as a tool that administrators, teachers, and counselors could use to build positive relationships with students. Another goal of the educators using the ISSPs was to teach students practical strategies of goal setting, developing plans, and time management skills.

Findings

Evaluating one of the foundational strategies utilized in the network of schools under study was the basis of my research. The literature review supported the belief that building relationships, collaborative practices, and professional development were key components to actively engaging students in schools and promoting student achievement. The overarching research question that guided my research was: To what extent does the Individualized Student Success Plan contribute to students earning their high school diploma in five public charter high schools? My related research questions were:

1. To what extent is there an impact when the principal oversees the implementation of the Individualized Student Success Plans?
2. To what extent is successful implementation contingent upon the authentic pairing of mentor and mentee?
3. What types of professional development opportunities emerge from this research that informs the work of other teachers serving at-risk, over-aged students?

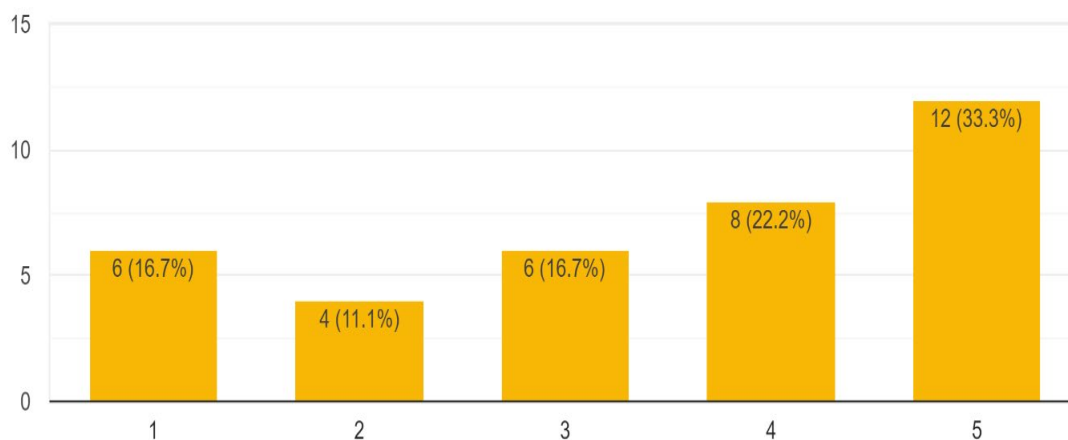
To answer the primary question and sub-questions, I conducted a survey (36 respondents) and nine interviews (nine of the 36 respondents agreed to participate in an interview). I wrote the survey questions to ascertain to what extent teachers utilized the ISSPs in the schools and to gather the perceptions of end users about the ISSPs. I implemented a semi-structured interview format to allow respondents an opportunity to answer questions that were relevant to their specific roles in the school; then, as the conversation evolved, I asked individually relevant follow-up questions.

Survey Results

Thirty-six people completed the online survey representing 64% of all school-based employees. The survey questions are presented in Appendix A. I asked survey questions using a Likert scale for responses. Statement 1 was, “I am actively involved in the ISSP process.” Among the respondents, 33.3% responded very involved, 22.2% responded involved, 16.7% responded neutral, 11.1% responded somewhat involved, and 16.7% responded not involved. I showed the responses to survey Statement 1 in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Responses to Survey Statement 1: I am Actively Involved in the ISSP Process

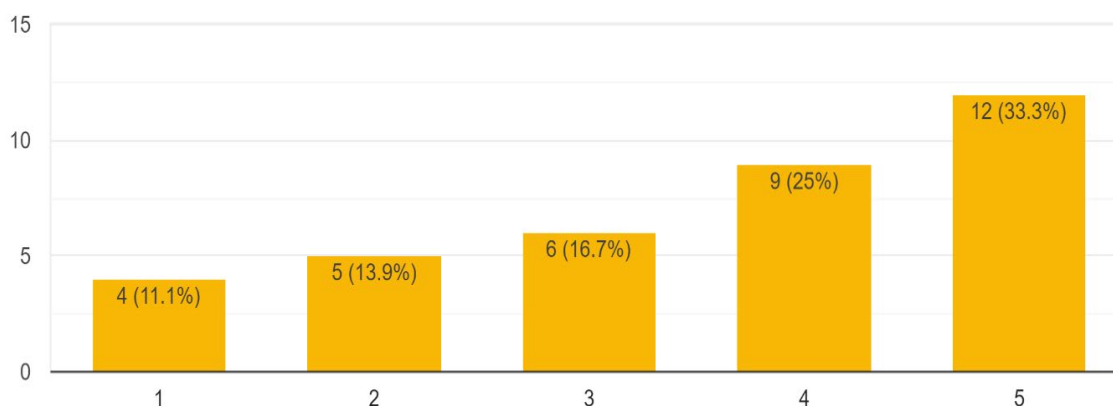


Note. N = 36. Response numbers represent the following 1 – not involved, 2 – somewhat involved, 3 – neutral, 4 – involved, and 5 – very involved

Adult engagement with students was a component of the ISSP; therefore, I included prompts on the survey to ascertain to what extent adults actively engaged in the ISSP process. Statement 2 was, “I have the ability to assist students with the creation of their ISSPs.” Among the respondents to Statement 2, 33.3% strongly agreed, 25% agreed, 16.7% were neutral, 13.9% disagreed, and 11.1% strongly disagreed. Figure 2 shows respondents’ involvement with the creation of the ISSP.

Figure 2

Responses to Survey Statement 2: I have the Ability to Assist Students with the Creation of their ISSP



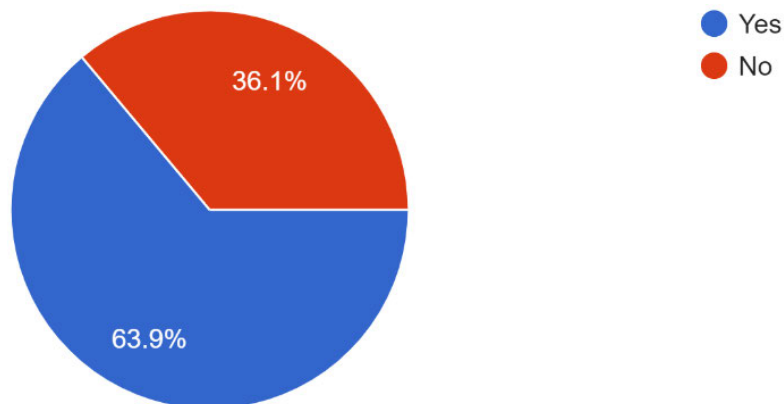
Note: N = 36. Response numbers represent the following 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree

The following statements addressed the component of mentoring students.

Statement 3 was, “I am an assigned mentor to students.” Among the respondents to Statement 3, 63.9% responded yes, and 36.1% responded no. Figure 3 shows the number of respondents assigned to mentor students.

Figure 3

Responses to Survey Statement 3: I am an Assigned Mentor to Students

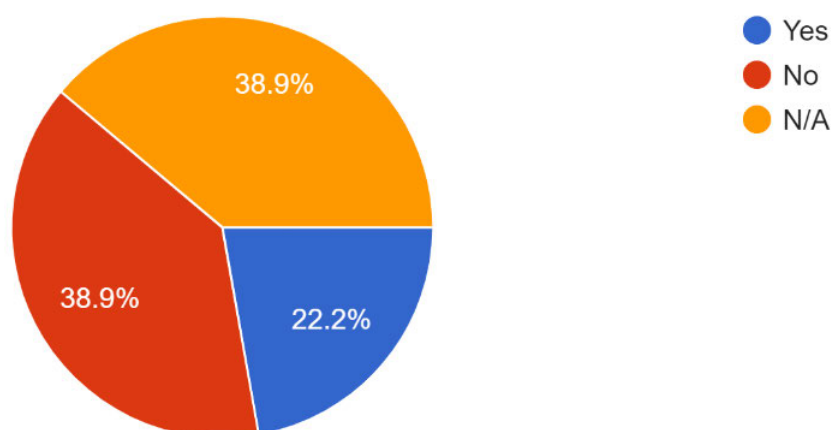


Note. N = 36. Most of the respondents are assigned mentors to students who have an Individualized Student Success Plan

I wanted to ascertain whether adults were allowed to select their mentees or if they were assigned their mentees. Statement 4 was, “I chose the students I mentor.” Among the respondents, 22.2% responded yes, 38.9% responded no, and 38.9% responded not applicable. Figure 4 shows the number of respondents who chose their mentees.

Figure 4

Responses to Survey Statement 4: I Chose the Students I Mentor



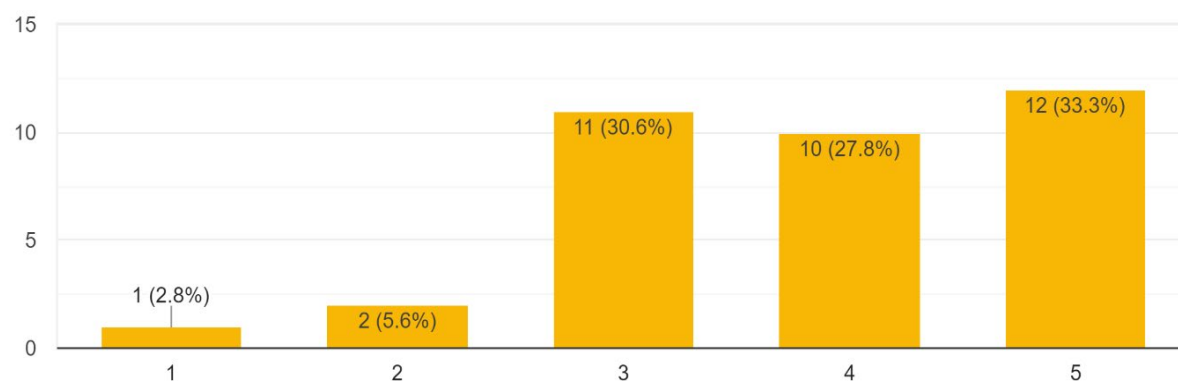
Note: N = 36. Eight respondents said they chose the students they mentor. Fourteen respondents said they do not choose the students they mentor. Fourteen respondents said the statement did not apply to them.

Most respondents indicated that they were involved in the ISSP process. The responses indicated a top-down approach to engagement. Thirty-six percent of respondents indicated they were not assigned to mentor students. Yet, 58% of respondents stated they could assist students with creating their ISSP. There was a disconnect in implementation beyond the credit check and the mentoring aspect of the ISSPs.

Most respondents believed students were more engaged in their academic progress when they had an ISSP. Figure 5 shows respondents' answers to survey Statement 5, "Students who have an ISSP are more engaged in their academic progress."

Figure 5

Responses to Survey Statement 5: Students who have an ISSP are More Engaged in their Academic Progress

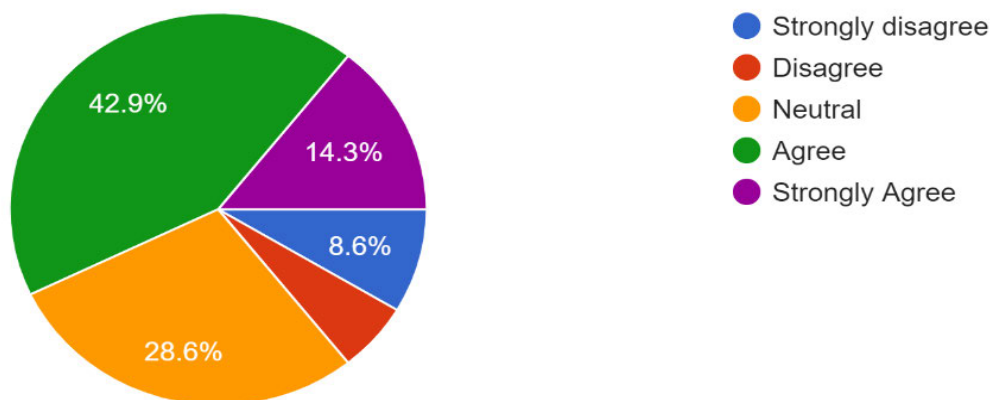


Note: N = 36. Response numbers represent the following, 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree, and 5 – strongly agree

Administrators, teachers, and support staff emphasized to students the importance of graduating and, more explicitly, graduating on time. The ISSP was the tool used to communicate with students about what they needed to do to graduate. Ninety-four percent of the respondents said they knew the purpose of the ISSPs. Survey Statement 6 was, “Students value the ISSP.” Among the respondents, 57.2% agreed or strongly agreed, 28.6% were neutral, and 14.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed that students valued the ISSPs. Figures 6 and 7, respectively, show students’ valuing of the ISSPs and respondents’ perceptions of knowing the purpose of the ISSPs.

Figure 6

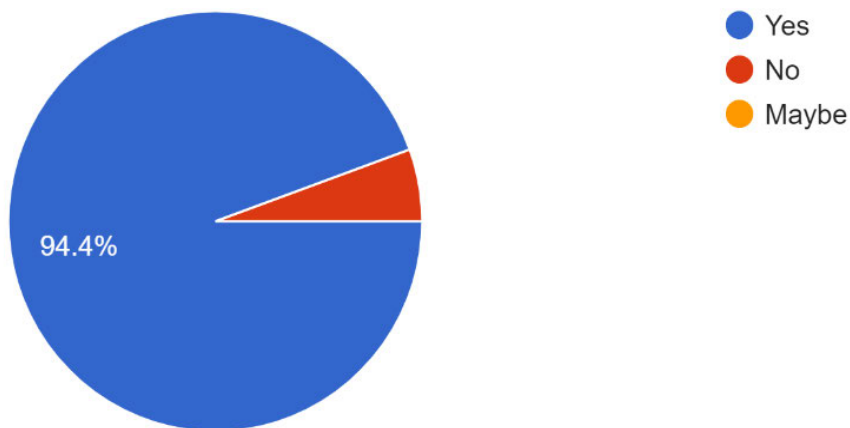
Responses to Survey Statement 6: Students Value the ISSP



Note: N = 36

Figure 7

Responses to Survey Statement 7: I Know the Purpose of the ISSP



Note: N = 36

Twenty-four of the 36 respondents answered question nine, asking respondents for their ideas concerning improving the ISSP process. Many of the suggestions focused on the availability of the ISSP to students, teachers, and parents. Others spoke to protocol, processes, and shared platform needs. Finally, others mentioned the need for the time allocated for ISSP development, review, and usage as a guidance and student planning guide. The responses are presented here in no particular order; these 26 responses emphasized the need for the establishment and reinforcement of procedures, stakeholder involvement, time investment, and multiple support levels and repetition for students:

1. We have found it to be more beneficial and digestible to the students to give them a handwritten copy since electives are so diverse.
2. Involve parents in the initial process at the beginning of the year, possibly during orientation.
3. Utilize a singular platform and establish a clear process of procedures for inputting and sharing the data with all staff.
4. Give teachers more planning time to meet with students and get them involved.
5. Checking for understanding with the student is key. We need to make sure our students understand how they will benefit from an Individualized Student Success Plan.
6. Sometimes, the students we serve have missing links in the learning process.
7. Students may have limited support, or they do not have any support at home.

8. Also, students may have adult responsibilities placed on them in the home. They may be viewed as the primary caregiver. With an Individualized Student Success Plan, it gives the students goals as well as direction.
9. I would like to sit down, and actively discuss the ISSP with students as they are enrolled.
10. Gather information needed from family.
11. Maybe let teachers have more say on who they mentor?
12. Student involvement/awareness needs to be more detailed & curriculum defined for each subject area.
13. An established protocol needs to be set. Stakeholders need to be held accountable for the development and implementation of the ISSP.
14. Review the students' goals and their vocational trade aspirations; clarify what they want to do in life.
15. I think visits from former students who successfully followed their ISSP would go a long way to foster credibility.
16. Is there a set form to fill out which would guide students as to what to write?
17. I am not aware of the ISSP as a document or practice at our school. I have only read about it in the online orientation.
18. Student input
19. Check on students weekly to ensure success.
20. Try to get the students involved from an athletic point of view and include athletic prospects as appropriate.

21. Require teachers to complete as a part of progress monitoring or complete with students during orientation.
22. Open to all students, college-bound, home bound, work force bound with flexibility.
23. Encourage students to be more responsible for being familiar with their ISSP.
24. Meet individually with the students to keep up with their progress. This could be done electronically.
25. I think that students need to have access to their ISSP daily or weekly.
26. The ISSP can definitely be an effective tool if the mentors have adequate time and opportunity to have those meaningful conversations with the students AND the parents/guardian(s) to establish the academic plans as well as follow up with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding academic progress. The ISSP model, as it is outlined, addresses all aspects of a well-defined academic and career plan. However, to effectively follow this model, there has to be adequate time to do so. This will require collaboration with other mentors as well as with the mentee regarding academic progress. Also, for a better outcome for the ISSP, the mentor should be assigned to mentees/students who are actively enrolled in their classes to allow better opportunity for mentor/mentee communication. Point and case, the General Education Teacher can only access the information of a student who she/he is assigned in the district's Student Information System. The mentor/teacher must be well informed of academic status and progress to assist develop and follow up on academic plans with students and parent(s)/guardian(s). Although it takes various individuals working together for the ISSP to be

developed, the student must have total ownership and buy-in of their ISSP for complete effectiveness and success.

Interview Results

I interviewed nine of the 36 survey respondents: three principals, one graduation coach, four teachers, and one registrar. I listed the interview questions in Appendix B; however, as an informal interview, I posed additional follow-up questions within the context of the conversation. The interviews lasted approximately 10-20 minutes each and took place between January 2022 and March 2022. I interviewed individual participants who had worked in the schools for various lengths of time. Two of the principals had the same amount of administrative experience but different content area backgrounds. They both began their instructional careers working in traditional public schools. One principal had been a teacher of students in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program, and the other had been a music teacher. The third principal I interviewed had four years of experience as a principal in the charter school and six years of experience as a social studies teacher. The graduation coach had over ten years of experience in a traditional school setting and three years at a charter school. The teacher interviewees included one in their first year at the charter school, one in their third year at the charter school, and a third teacher with ten years of experience at the charter school. Two of these teachers also served as ESE Specialists. The registrar had ten years of experience at the charter school. Appendix C contains summary notes of the responses to the interview questions by the interviewee and the role of the interviewee. In addition, my following analyses include the findings from the interviews.

Survey and Interview Results Analyses

The responses from the survey and interview questions provided answers and insight regarding the context, culture, conditions, and competencies within the five schools of study (Wagner et al., 2006). Through my primary question, I focused on the value of Individualized Student Success Plans. Seeking to answer the question of implementation and impact in the schools, I had to ask stakeholders about their roles and their perceptions of the Individualized Student Success Plans. Through my secondary questions, I allowed end users to provide recommendations to improve the implementation. Using the responses from the participants and findings from my literature review, I presented recommendations for change in the implementation process for ISSPs in schools.

Contexts

In order to understand the barriers to successfully implementing the Individualized Student Success Plans, I examined external forces beyond the control of school personnel that impacted their work. Although governing board members govern charter schools, they have contractual agreements with the local school board. The district school board is the charter school sponsor, and the contract outlines expectations regarding the school's academic and financial performance (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

The five schools of study operated in three different districts in the state. The charter school liaisons in one of the districts afforded the charter school complete liberty to operate with no interference from the district. The liaisons in the other two districts were intrusive in their practices and monitoring of the other four charter schools. The two

districts whose liaisons were intrusive in their oversight of the schools and imposed expectations that monopolized the time of school-based personnel created a conflict between their ability to meet district expectations and concentrate on instructional practices. One example of intrusiveness was the requirement for an administrator from the charter school to attend monthly cohort meetings at the district office. During the meetings, each school administrator shared information about students who were in danger of not graduating on time. District personnel would share available district resources to assist school personnel with meeting the needs of the students. District support was not available for the charter schools.

Another intrusive practice of district leaders was denying charter school personnel the ability to enroll students in the district student information system. Since the registrars at the charter schools did not have the right to enroll students, they had to complete forms to send to the district-based personnel to enroll the students before they could access student data to share with administrators to generate schedules for the students. One of the principals said, “Jumping through hoops to enroll a student when district schools can do it on their own, gathering documents for site visits twice a year, and then being audited by the district for FTE [Full Time Equivalent] on top of that. It seems like a lot of superfluous and repetitive proof that we do our jobs.”

The leaders of one of the schools had 19 contractual goals they were responsible for meeting each year. District liaisons told three schools that if they met the contractual graduation rate, they did not have to worry about the additional goals in the contract. The leaders of the fifth school were not held to contractual goals.

In addition to meeting contractual obligations with the sponsoring school districts, the charter school leaders also had to follow state and federal guidelines. Two schools received School Improvement Ratings (SIR) from the state instead of a school grade because of their alternative school classification. School Improvement Ratings were assigned as Commendable, Maintaining, or Unsatisfactory. At least 80% of students eligible for the state assessments used to calculate the SIR had to test for the school to receive a rating. The related state legislation rule defines an alternative school as a school that provides dropout prevention and academic intervention services. The schools had difficulty meeting the 80% tested requirement because the rules excluded students with a dropout prevention/juvenile justice program code of R (dropout retrieval) or E (alternative to expulsion) from counting in the calculations. In addition, only first-time test takers factored into the analysis.

One of the sponsoring districts coded all the students in the schools as an E or R; therefore, the schools were ineligible to receive a School Improvement Rating. The same district withheld Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds from the schools citing that the schools did not receive an SIR, so they did not qualify for the funds. When the district withheld funds from small schools, the impact was more detrimental than it was for larger schools. Public schools in the state of study were funded based on the number of students enrolled. The state surveyed an 11-day window in the fall and an 11-day window in the spring. Students had to be in attendance during the survey period to count for funding. Student enrollment and attendance determined the financing of the schools. The two schools that did not receive an SIR petitioned the state to receive a score. They did not meet the 80% tested threshold because of the population of students they served.

With the Educational Service Provider's assistance, the school administrators could show the state accountability officers that enough students were tested to ensure that school data accurately represented school performance. As a result, both schools received their school improvement ratings.

Culture

The goal of all stakeholders was to help all students graduate. Unfortunately, federal, state, and district accountability measures focused only on on-time graduates, students who graduated within four years of entering high school. The founding board members designed the schools to serve students who were not ready to graduate within four years. So, there was already pressure to do the work to catch students up so they could graduate on time. One of the barriers between students and their diplomas was testing. Leaders in the state of study required students to pass assessments in English Language Arts and math and to take end-of-course assessments, which counted as 30% of their overall grade, to earn a high school diploma. If students could not pass the state assessment, they could take the college board exams to make a concordant score (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Testing monopolized the time of all personnel. One principal said, “The testing schedule – the excessive amount of testing we have to do – we have to take the entire testing window to test students. If we don’t use the whole window, we can’t get all the kids tested. If they don’t test, they can’t get a diploma.” In addition, all respondents identified the overall poor attendance of students as a barrier. One principal said, “Student attendance is the overarching umbrella. When attendance is poor, it affects everything we do or try to do.”

Conditions

The principals' leadership styles in the schools influenced the involvement of stakeholder groups in the ISSP process. Schools led by principals with a collaborative approach to student engagement afforded personnel more opportunities for direct employment in the ISSP process, from the development of the plans to the progress monitoring. The survey results above revealed that 52.5% of respondents were either very involved or somewhat involved in the ISSP process.

During the interview, I asked, “How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?” One teacher stated, “It depends on my leadership – how much they want me to collaborate in the process. If you spread the wealth and spread your knowledge, it makes me a great ally.” One of the ESE specialists said, “Unless they are my student, I don’t really have a role in it. I primarily work with students who have IEPs [Individual Education Plan], so I’m not very involved.” The graduation coach said,

I redesigned the form to include all testing so that students can see all testing.

They see what tests they have taken and what they need to do to pass the test.

Currently, passing scores are not indicated on the form. I would like to add passing scores, but there’s no room on the form.

The other ESE specialist said, “Make sure the leadership team has a solid foundation, a plan for implementation. I’m from a world of what doesn’t get monitored doesn’t get done.”

One of the teachers said, “I could try to be better prepared to answer questions to help them [students]. To continue doing the coaching; show interest in them [students].” The registrar said, “I think it’s the ESE teacher, the principal, and the classroom teacher

who should create the ISSPs together. The collaboration of the teachers is important because you can't have just one person doing it." One of the principals said:

I need to update the process and make it more efficient for all staff. Train my staff to know how to decipher a transcript. Setting time aside to make sure we complete one for every student at the beginning of the year. Create a system that students know on specific days I will do a credit check. I thought about setting aside time in August to have my staff do credit checks. Getting the whole staff to be involved in the process. Not every teacher can see every kid because they don't have access in Focus. Involving parents in the process. In addition to parent night. I told my staff they should be making more parental contact.

Another principal said, "Consistency – it's not a one-and-done. ISSPs need to be reviewed at least monthly, preferably bi-weekly. There must be follow-up to ensure that they are accurate and play a part in students' success." The third principal said, "We have yet to find a more comprehensive electronic method to help students understand. Trying to figure out a way to get our database a little more diverse. We're getting more kids to go to college due to the ISSPs."

Interviewees indicated the strengths of the ISSPs from two perspectives – student-centered and personnel-centered. One respondent said, "I really like the ISSP because it gives me a glance at the students so that I can see here's what you need, here's what you have." One of the principals said, "I think the biggest strength is that they play a huge part in students planning their future. I tell my students it's very difficult to have a goal if you don't have a plan." Another principal said, "It gives a visual for the kids to go by. Almost like a Bible. It lets them know what they've done and what they need to do."

One of the teachers said, “The kids love visuals. It’s a really good tool for the kids and for the adults as well.”

When I asked what factors positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs, respondents had a wide range of responses. One of the teachers said, “Actually transcribing it with my team. I feel it’s important for each teacher to be taught the process. It was a team-building activity for all of us to be together and learn how to interpret.” One respondent said, “Quick at a glance. I like the design of it. I like that more than one person can make changes. Good backup is always positive.” One principal said,

I think the most influential process is them [students] being able to sit down with someone one on one and discuss their needs. At the high school, they get lost in the shuffle because guidance counselors have so many kids to meet with. We are a small school, so they get to sit down with us and with parents when available to discuss what they need to get their high school diploma.

Another respondent said,

Having the conversation with the student so that they understand. We have the mini grad checker. They can go and review the data wall whenever they need. I tell my students whenever they complete a credit, they need to check it off on their sheet and then we go to the data wall and check it off together.

Competencies

All schools utilized Individualized Student Success Plans to track students’ graduation requirements. The principals in all five schools initiated the ISSP process. Two schools had graduation coaches who assisted the principal with the development of the ISSP and shared the contents with teachers. One principal worked with the ESE

specialist to create and implement the ISSP. One principal did the work alone. Finally, one principal started the process and delegated the follow-up to a teacher.

Identifying where the student is regarding meeting graduation requirements was only one component of the ISSP. The responses indicated that credit attainment, grade point average, and assessments were the primary purposes of the ISSP. The sense of urgency for students to complete credits and earn their high school diploma dominated the culture of the schools. District and school leaders routinely reminded school-based personnel of the importance of ensuring that as many students as possible met graduation requirements to be on-time graduates.

Interpretation

Survey and interview responses provided answers to the question of inconsistent implementation practices of the Individualized Student Success Plans in the five charter schools of study. Data indicated that respondents believed the ISSPs were meaningful for students and staff. Implementing the ISSP provided a structured approach to active engagement promoting student success. Respondents disclosed that ISSPs were being utilized in each school but not for every student. Respondents also revealed that the ISSP process was more exclusive than inclusive in some schools.

One of the problems unveiled was a lack of understanding of the full intent of the ISSPs. Two principals discussed the use of the ISSPs to include goal setting and planning, while one solely addressed the purpose of the ISSP as a credit check form. One intended component of the ISSP included connecting students to at least one adult in the school setting. The student and adult were to work collaboratively as mentor and mentee

to help the student be fully engaged in their academic journey. The engagement included goal setting, planning, and developing strategies to meet their goals.

Another problem that surfaced was time constraints for gathering information needed for the ISSPs and then updating the ISSPs as students earned credits and took standardized assessments. In three of the schools, the principal was the person who took on the responsibility of evaluating transcripts and entering the data on the ISSP form. With all of the other responsibilities involved in the school's day-to-day operations, this process was inefficient.

Respondents also discussed time constraints. Four schools had district sponsors who were intrusive in their monitoring practices. Leadership in one of the districts required leaders from the charter school to attend monthly cohort meetings at the district. Before the meetings, leaders had to compile data reports for the students who were not on track to graduate on time. The charter school leaders had to gather the requested data for every student because the population the schools served were students who were not on track to graduate on time. Charter leaders compiled the data and attended the meetings but received nothing from the district to assist them with their students.

Leaders in another district restricted access rights to the student information system preventing charter school personnel from enrolling and withdrawing students. Charter school personnel had to complete enrollment paperwork and send it to the district charter office personnel for students to be enrolled. District school personnel had access and could enroll students immediately. Leaders in this same district also conducted site visits twice a year at the charter schools and conducted a separate financial audit of the schools. One principal shared that they felt as if these efforts seemed superfluous and

repetitive. The time school personnel spent ensuring they complied with district mandates was time that could not be devoted to mentoring students. In addition to district monitoring, state testing consumed much time. Every day of the testing windows had to be utilized because of the attendance patterns of students.

Judgments

The responses from the survey and interviews revealed that stakeholders believed the Individualized Student Success Plans had a positive impact on student success. When asked if students with an ISSP engaged more in their academic progress, 61.1% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed, 30.6% were neutral, and 7.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked if students valued the ISSP, 14.3% strongly agreed, 42.9% agreed, 28.6% were neutral, 5.7% disagreed, and 8.6% strongly disagreed. The ISSPs were valued but not implemented consistently within the five schools of study. The principals in the schools had different perspectives on the purpose of the ISSPs; therefore, the teachers and support personnel had a skewed understanding of the intent.

The ESP failed to communicate the intended purpose of the ISSP to school leaders. To allow schools to maintain a sense of autonomy, the ESP had not followed up on the expectations of the ISSP. The mentoring portion of the ISSP was the component that connected the student to an adult in the academic setting. Connectedness re-engaged the student in the academic process and promoted student achievement. The ESP team needed to re-evaluate its practices and reintroduce the ISSP to school leaders.

Recommendations

Survey results indicated that 94.4% of respondents believed they knew the purpose of the Individualized Student Success Plans. However, respondents' answers to

survey and interview questions revealed that respondents did not have a complete understanding of the ISSP. My first recommendation is that the ESP team ensure all stakeholders understand the Individualized Student Success Plans and all the components of the ISSP. Members of the Educational Service Provider team should develop a clear explanation of the ISSP purpose and process.

Data management becomes more complex when students transfer multiple times throughout their high school careers. One of the main concerns regarding transcript analysis was the inefficiency with which it took place. After training the school staff, the ESP team should provide support with data systems to mainstream the transcript analysis. After developing the data input and sharing process, the staff needs training in effective mentoring practices. Building-level administrators should work collaboratively with their teams to establish schedules that allot time for mentoring activities.

Another concern revealed from interview respondents' answers to survey and interview questions was the disconnect of the ESP team in the ISSP process. To reconnect the ESP team and school-based personnel in the ISSP process, the ESP team should develop a calendar for support. The ESP team should create a monitoring tool that defines the roles of every individual in the school's ISSP process. The team should work with the school-based administrators to develop the tools applicable to each school site. The ESP and the schools should view the process as a continuous improvement process and monitor and review practices regularly for improvement.

Conclusion

Survey and interview responses from administrators, teachers, and support personnel provided an understanding of the context, culture, conditions, and

competencies of the educational environment of the five charter schools under study. In addition, analyzing their responses and reviewing relevant literature provided me with information to refine current implementation practices. In the following chapter, I discussed strategies to promote the successful implementation of Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSPs).

Chapter Five: To-Be Framework

While in the previous chapter, I mapped out the current practices in the five charter schools under study related to the implementation of Individualized Student Success Plans and the findings from my research study, in this chapter, I detailed an ideal environment for the implementation of the ISSPs. The purpose of my study was to evaluate the implementation practices of a schoolwide initiative to correct ineffective practices while building a collaborative culture that promotes implementation with fidelity. In Appendix E, I provided a graphic organizer of the To-Be framework upon which I developed my conceptualization of a best practices environment for the implementation of the ISSPs. Creating a system-wide organizational change required me to evaluate my findings within the context, culture, conditions, and competencies of the schools under study (Wagner et al., 2006).

The Educational Service Provider (ESP) leaders developed Individualized Student Success Plans to provide students with a road map to help them meet graduation requirements. The components of ISSP included connecting students with an adult in the school, providing them with their academic history and remaining graduation requirements, and teaching students how to create goals and action steps to meet them. In addition, the ISSP process provided a structured platform for adults to connect with students to re-engage them in the educational process.

Survey and interview responses revealed there were inconsistent implementation practices at the five schools under study. Two of the principals were directly involved in the ISSP process from the beginning and involved teachers and staff minimally. Two principals were directly involved in the process working collaboratively with their

teachers creating a team effort. One principal made the ISSPs and shared them with the staff but had no expectations for adult and student connections.

Data also revealed that there was a lack of understanding of every component of the ISSP process. All schools implemented the ISSPs to communicate academic history and remaining graduation requirements. However, none of the schools utilized the ISSPs to teach students to create goals and develop a plan to accomplish those goals. Interview respondents cited barriers such as time constraints, mobility of students, students' absenteeism, and the cumbersomeness of keeping the ISSPs up to date.

Collaboration among the Education Service Provider (ESP) team and the principals will be essential to create a system-wide change for the effective implementation of the ISSP process. Data revealed that stakeholders value the ISSP process, and they believe students who have an ISSP perform better academically. The first step for the ESP team to take is to create the condition for change (Reeves, 2009). The ESP team must work with principals to ensure they have a clear understanding of all components of the ISSP. Reeves (2009) used the analogy of pulling weeds before you plant flowers. The ESP team must work with principals to remove misconceptions about the ISSP process before reintroducing the ISSP process to the staff at the schools.

The ESP team and principals will need to discuss how the ISSP process will be communicated to school personnel. School personnel are already familiar with the ISSPs, so the leadership team must be intentional to ensure changes are made to their current practices. Generating the momentum for change will occur with high degrees of purpose and focus, engagement, and collaboration, particularly around learning, teaching, and instructional leadership (Wagner et al., 2006). When reintroducing the staff to the ISSPs,

leaders must create an environment that welcomes and encourages active engagement from all participants. Fullan's (2008) second secret to change is to connect peers with purpose. Implementing the ISSPs effectively will require continuous purposeful peer interaction. Fullan explained that this type of interaction creates a collegial environment that fosters learning.

Envisioning the Success To-Be

Implementing all the components of the Individualized Student Success Plan for MyKayla (a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality) and students like her could potentially foster the environment needed to re-engage the 10% of dropouts and nongraduates. MyKayla is a 19-year-old student who misses school regularly because she must help her family financially. Connecting MyKayla with an adult mentor in the school could potentially change the trajectory of where she is headed. In addition, MyKayla could have an adult in the school who can help her formulate goals and strategies to accomplish those goals.

Another potential outcome could be increasing teacher efficacy. Successful implementation of the ISSPs mandates professional development, allotment of time for the adults to collaborate, allotment of time for adults to mentor students, and building community partnerships. These elements promote community.

Re-engaging the students in the academic process may positively impact the lives of the students and their families. Many of the students attending the schools under study will be the first high school graduates in their families. In addition, many of them have younger siblings. Having a structure in place to assist students with developing skills that will benefit them in every facet of their life benefits society.

Successful implementation of Individualized Student Success Plans has the potential to be a blueprint to share with high schools around the country. The process includes collaboration and relationship building. It also provides mentorship, life skills, and reflective practices for continuous improvement.

Future Contexts

Through the semi-structured interviews of nine school staff members, my study revealed that the five schools under study did not have a cohesive partnership with the district sponsors. District leaders monitored the charter school leaders to varying degrees. Leaders in two of the school districts implemented practices that created barriers between district leaders and charter school leaders. For example, district leaders required charter school leaders to attend district meetings that did not benefit the charter schools. Charter school leaders also discussed district leaders' imposition of requirements beyond the contract between the charter school and the district sponsor.

Charter school leaders also had to meet state and federal guidelines. The charter schools under study were categorized to receive School Improvement Ratings (SIR). Leaders in one of the school districts utilized the school improvement rating to ascertain whether the charter school qualified for Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds. The leaders in this district also used state reporting codes for the students that excluded them from counting in the calculations the state used to determine the schools' SIR. Since the charter schools did not receive an SIR, district leaders said the schools were ineligible to receive PECO funds.

Ideally, district leaders and charter school leaders will work in partnership to promote increased student achievement for every student. The perfect future context will

provide opportunities for district leaders and charter school leaders to have open communication discussing the goals of the district and the schools. Through these discussions, the leaders will have the opportunity to learn from each other and share ideas, processes, and resources. Fullan (2008) discussed the importance of transparency, “openness about what practices are most strongly connected to successful outcomes” (p. 99). Bringing the leaders together will help them realize they are on the same team with the same goal of helping students succeed academically. Although students attend the charter school, they are still part of the school district. The charter school students count in the accountability matrices from the state.

Future Culture

All stakeholders will be focused on getting the students to graduate on time. In the state of study, an on-time graduate is a student who completes high school within four years of entering high school. The charter schools under study served students who were not on track to graduate in the four-year window. Therefore, district leaders included stipulations in the charter school contracts requiring a percentage of students to graduate on time. School leaders emphasized the importance of the school meeting the contractual graduation rate threshold for fear of the contract being terminated if the goal was not met.

Credit attainment was only one factor for students to meet graduation requirements; testing was the main hurdle for most of the students. Students had to pass English Language Arts and math state assessments to earn their high school diplomas. In addition to those assessments, they also had to attempt to pass end-of-course assessments which counted as 30% of their overall grade. Students were permitted to take college board exams and use those scores as concordant scores in the event they did not pass the

state assessments. To afford students as many opportunities as possible to earn passing scores on required assessments, school calendars were filled with testing days. Students' poor attendance negatively impacted the culture of the school. All survey respondents identified students' poor attendance as a barrier in the ISSP process. Building relationships through mentoring was complex when students did not come to school. When students felt like all they did was test when they came to school, they were not actively engaged, and they avoided coming to the brick and mortar.

In a utopian culture, leaders at all levels will be intentional in their practices to create a culture that fosters and encourages collaboration at all levels within the school district. Fullan (2016) said that "leaders need to be the glue that will increase the coherence of the district and school efforts at every level and build a clear path to improve learning in demonstrable ways" (p. 17). State leaders will recognize that more testing is not the answer to proving academic achievement. State leaders will also realize that students are individuals and they do not all learn the same way or at the same time; therefore, penalizing school districts and individual schools because all students do not complete high school at the same time is unreasonable. Finally, state leaders will listen to and work with educators when developing graduation requirements.

At the district and school levels, leaders will work together to determine purposeful goals and a monitoring process that welcomes transparency. Leaders will work together to build the capacity of all personnel to have a positive impact on student growth. Leaders working as partners will create a healthy environment for the adults to grow and thrive, thus creating the potential for students to engage actively in their learning. Transparency will be prevalent at the school level between administrators and

teachers. There will be collegiality among the staff because of the embedded collaborative practices in the school.

Teachers will focus on teaching students the curriculum by utilizing all available resources to make learning engaging. As a result, students will come to school to learn because the environment is alive and student-focused, not test-driven. This shift can potentially change the dynamics of the entire school system. With students coming to school excited about learning, the barriers previously discussed will be nonexistent.

Future Conditions

Leaders directly impact conditions in the school. Wagner et al. (2006) defined conditions as the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources (p. 101). The data from my research revealed that the principal's leadership style influenced the level of engagement of the staff in the ISSP process. In addition, the principal's understanding of the purpose of the ISSP influenced the status of the implementation of ISSPs.

Principals who fostered collaborative practices with their teams had more stakeholder engagement in the ISSP process. Consequently, principals who practiced a top-down leadership style did not involve other stakeholders in the ISSP process. Respondents cited time as a barrier for the ISSPs. Respondents said they had a hard time finding the time to update the ISSPs for students. They also said there was not enough time scheduled into the school day to adequately meet with students to discuss their ISSPs.

Ideal conditions for the implementation of the ISSPs will include explicit conditions around roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders (Wagner et al., 2006).

Therefore, the Educational Service Provider team will need to clearly define the ISSP process, including the purpose of the ISSP. ESP team members will train the principals and work with the principals to determine the best way to train school-based personnel.

The ESP team members will develop a database that will provide teachers with academic information for their students. School-based personnel will be trained in how to use the database and will be given access to update student information as needed. The database will have a dashboard that includes all components of the ISSP to ensure uniformity with the ISSP process.

The ESP principal leader will work with school principals to create master schedules that include time for teachers to mentor students. For example, Charter School A has five teachers, two paraprofessionals, an ESE staffing specialist, an administrative assistant, and a principal. There will be approximately 150 students in the school. There will be two sessions built into the master schedule for students to attend. The first session for students will begin at 7:30 a.m. and end at 12:34 p.m. The second session for students will begin at 9:32 a.m. and end at 2:36 p.m. The students will attend five one-hour classes per day. Students will be divided among instructional personnel for mentoring. Classroom teachers will choose approximately 20 students each to mentor, and the ESE staffing specialist and principal will select about 15 students each. Tuesdays and Thursdays each week will be mentoring days for teachers. A paraprofessional will be assigned to each teacher's class during one period on Tuesdays and Thursdays so that teachers can spend approximately 10 minutes of one on one mentoring time with their mentees using the ISSP template as a guide for discussions (See Appendix F for a sample master schedule).

Leaders will also build staff schedules that identify specific times for progress monitoring. Charter School A will reserve the end of the workday for meetings (See Appendix F). During progress monitoring meetings, personnel will discuss the academic progress of level one and two students as well as strategies and instructional practices that will be used to meet the needs of the students. The ESP principal leader will develop a schedule for principals from all five charter schools to meet to evaluate the ISSP process to ensure proper implementation and continuous improvement.

Future Competencies

Data revealed that principals did not have a complete understanding of all components of the ISSP. For example, principals utilized the ISSPs with staff and students to communicate graduation requirements, but the use of the ISSPs to connect students with an adult in the school to teach the students how to set goals and create a plan to meet their goals was not present. The ESP team did not provide explicit guidance on the ISSP process and purpose. Nor did the ESP team provide professional development to principals or teachers for proper implementation.

Supporting an institutional shift to my To-Be model will require the ESP team to provide targeted professional development to principals. Competencies are most effectively built when professional development is focused, job-embedded, continuous, constructed, and collaborative (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 99). For example, equipping principals with the skills to facilitate progress monitoring and mentoring sessions will be the focus of professional development; when the principals are competent in these areas, the likelihood of implementing these practices in their schools increases.

Principals will have a leadership professional learning community using the Four Pillar Practices for Growth (Drago-Severson et al., 2013). Drago-Severson et al. (2013) quoted Barth (2006) and others stating:

1. Pillar Practice 1: Teaming – Teaming brings adults together to engage in dialogue and, in so doing, creates opportunities for private and group reflection, reduces isolation, nurtures innovation, builds individual and group capacity, and establishes knowledge-based management systems. (p. 35)

Drago-Severson et al. (2013) quoted Cochran-Smith and Lyle (2006) and others, stating:

2. Pillar Practice 2: Providing Leadership Roles – Providing leadership roles emphasizes the intentionality behind the new responsibilities ... offering emerging leaders appropriate supports and challenges so they can grow from leadership experience – shifting the emphasis away from simple task designation or completion. (p. 37)

Drago-Severson et al. (2013) quoted Drago-Severson (2004b, 2009, 2012), stating:

3. Pillar Practice 3: Collegial Inquiry – Collegial inquiry is a shared dialogue that purposefully involves reflecting on one's assumptions, values, beliefs, commitments, and convictions with others as part of the learning process. (pp. 37-38)
4. Pillar Practice 4: Mentoring – Mentoring is a relational practice that customarily offers a more private way of supporting growth. This practice creates a context for broadening perspectives, examining assumptions, and sharing expertise. (pp. 39-40)

Utilizing this framework with principals will serve as a model for principals to implement with their staffs. The four pillar practices will provide opportunities for differentiation based on the individual needs of adult learners. Building the repertoire of skills and knowledge of the faculty and staff will create opportunities for the successful implementation of the ISSP process.

Conclusion

Successful implementation of a school-wide initiative requires cohesiveness within the organization. Charter school leaders have the task of working in a context with several factors beyond their control. Working in that context, charter leaders need the ability to develop a shared moral purpose and meaning as well as a pathway for attaining that purpose (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 17). When instructional leaders come together and focus on the mission to serve all students no matter their background or which school they attend, leaders will create the culture, conditions, and competencies for the implementation of best practices. Shifting to the ideal educational environment requires stakeholders from every level in the organization to develop specific goals with a purpose-driven action plan to accomplish the goals.

Chapter Six: Strategies and Actions

Earning a high school diploma is considered by many to be the first significant milestone of transitioning into adulthood. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) has steadily increased from 79% in 2010-2011 to 86% in 2018-2019 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). In addition, the Department of Education in the state under study reported a 90.1% graduation rate for 2020-2021 (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Although the reports reflect a positive trend of more students earning their high school diploma, the dropout rate continues to be a factor.

The leaders in the five charter schools under study created the schools to address the needs of students who are not on track to graduate. The leaders of the schools worked with the members of the Educational Service Provider (ESP) to implement Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSP). The purpose of the ISSP was to connect the students with at least one adult in the building to develop a positive relationship and create connectedness to the school for the student. Another element of the ISSP process was to help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

I conducted my research utilizing the Arenas of Change framework (Wagner et al., 2006). Analyzing the data through the lenses of context, culture, conditions, and competencies provided me with evidence of the conditions of the schools under study (see Appendix D) and the basis for developing an ideal process for the implementation of the ISSPs (see Appendix E).

To uncover the barriers to a successful implementation of the ISSPs, I examined the context from which the schools under study operated. Wagner et al. (2006) stated,

“Context refers to the larger organizational systems within which we work, and their demands and expectations, formal and informal” (p. 104). Principals identified inconsistent practices from district leaders. Three of the five schools under study operated in the same school district. The remaining two schools served in two differing districts. District leaders in two of the three districts represented imposed expectations on charter school leaders that impeded their availability to implement all components of the ISSP. Examples of these practices included leaders from one district expecting additional contractual goals to be met whether the graduation goal was met. This contrasted with leaders in one district who disregarded additional contractual goals if the graduation goal was met. The leaders in the third district were completely lax in their oversight of the charter school.

Another contextual barrier was how district leaders interpreted eligibility for charter schools to receive Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds. Leaders in one district awarded the funds to the charter school with no eligibility requirements. Leaders in another district used the graduation rate as the eligibility requirement. Leaders in the third district used the School Improvement Rating (SIR) as the eligibility requirement.

In the state under study, schools that receive an SIR instead of a school grade must test at least 80% of eligible students to qualify to receive a rating. However, charter school leaders found achieving the 80% tested threshold difficult. One reason was that the rules of the state under study excluded students who had a dropout prevention/juvenile justice program code of R (dropout retrieval) or E (alternative to expulsion) from counting in the calculations.

Another barrier principals discussed was district leaders requiring their attendance at meetings that did not lead to any support for the charter schools. Principals stated that the time spent at the district-led meetings was unnecessary time away from their school buildings. The charter school leaders stated that the time and effort they spent gathering data in preparation for the district leaders' mandated meetings monopolized a great deal of their time.

Due to accountability measures, state, district, and school leaders focused their efforts on students earning their high school diplomas with their cohort. Charter school leaders have a contractual graduation rate goal they feel compelled to meet so that the district sponsor does not terminate the contract. "Culture refers to the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout the system" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 102). School leaders were so focused on students completing credits and passing assessments needed to meet graduation requirements that full implementation of the ISSPs did not occur.

The ISSPs were simply used as credit checks for students and teachers. The data showed that respondents believed students who had an ISSP valued the ISSP and were more engaged in the educational process. Interviewees explained the ISSPs as a tool used to inform students of what graduation requirements they had not met. There was little to no mention of the mentoring aspect or goal setting for students included in the ISSP process.

My study revealed that the As-Is conditions did not support the successful implementation of the ISSPs. Principals' leadership styles impacted the level of collaboration and involvement of stakeholders in the ISSP process. Another condition

respondents identified was a lack of time to implement the ISSPs entirely. Respondents said that student absenteeism and no time built into the schedule to meet with students were two barriers. Finally, principals discussed their role in implementing the ISSPs, and their explanations did not represent a shared effort of all stakeholders in the process.

Respondents did identify that having the time to discuss the contents of the ISSPs with the students was rewarding for the adult and the student. However, some respondents felt inept at conversing with the students because of a lack of training and a full understanding of graduation requirements and transcripts. In response to my research findings, I have conceptualized a plan that will lead to the successful implementation of the ISSPs, promoting collaboration and student success.

I will address four main areas in my plan for organizational change; (a) professional development, (b) intentional scheduling, (c) fiscal and human resources, and (d) communication. My change plan will provide the teams in the charter schools under study with a context that offers all stakeholders the opportunity to thrive in a positive academic environment. The culture will promote collaboration, focus on meeting the individual needs of every student, and active engagement in learning from the adults and students. The ideal conditions will include clearly defined roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the implementation process of the ISSPs. Personnel will have the resources and time needed to mentor students effectively. The competencies of all personnel will be developed through Professional Learning Communities (PLC) utilizing the Four Pillar Practices (Drago-Severson et al., 2013). The Pillar Practices framework provides a structure for team building, leadership development, shared dialog, and mentoring.

Strategies and Actions

I developed my strategies and action plan (Appendix G) using Fullan and Quinn's (2016) coherence framework. School-based stakeholders utilized the Individualized Student Success Plans to varying degrees with no continuity from school to school. Fullan and Quinn (2016) said, "Coherence consists of the shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work. Coherence, then, is what is in the minds and actions of people individually and especially collectively" (pp. 1-2). The coherence framework focuses on consistency and specificity. The four components of the coherence framework are focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 3).

Empower Stakeholders with Knowledge

Developing a solid foundation for sustainability and growth is the first step in my action plan. The Educational Service Provider (ESP) team will create a detailed white paper outlining the purpose, rationale, goals, and components of the ISSP to use during the first round of professional development. Next, the ESP instructional leader will schedule professional development sessions with the principals of the charter schools. The first session will be used to reintroduce the ISSP process to the principals. Next, the ESP instructional leader and principals will work together to determine the structure and content of follow-up sessions for principals.

Next, the ESP instructional leader and principals will determine the structure and content of professional development sessions for school-based personnel. Principals will decide if they want the initial meeting to be a collective meeting with all five schools or if they want separate meetings. The ESP instructional leader will facilitate the initial

meeting for the school-based personnel to thoroughly explain the ISSP process.

Subsequent training sessions will consist of mentoring training, how to interpret student transcripts, and progress monitoring.

Remove Barriers to Success

To provide opportunities for consistency, the leadership teams will work together to remove barriers. The ESP instructional leader will work with the principals of each school to develop a master schedule with dedicated time for mentoring and progress monitoring. The leadership team will redesign the ISSP template for specificity and ease of use. The ESP team will develop a shared database so that all staff members will have real-time access to relevant student information. The ESP team will train school personnel on how to use the database and set up a Help Desk for continued assistance.

The ESP team's finance department, curriculum specialist, and instructional leader will work with principals to utilize grant funds and donations to develop incentives for students and staff. In addition, they will intentionally identify resources to provide field trips to businesses, colleges, universities, technical schools, museums, and so on to give students exposure to potential opportunities for life after high school. Leaders will also work to create a culture that encourages and welcomes input from all stakeholders so that everyone has ownership in the process.

Inspect Expectations

Educators are very familiar with the term accountability. Fullan and Quinn (2016) discussed external and internal accountability, describing external accountability as standards, expectations, transparent data, and selective interventions (p. 109). Inspecting expectations falls into the external accountability realm. The ESP instructional leader

coach will include the ISSP process as a component of the monthly monitoring tool used with principals throughout the year. Having the ISSP as an element of the monitoring tool will ensure that principals are intentional about implementation. The ESP instructional leader coach will work with principals to develop a monitoring tool to use with their staffs to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the ISSPs.

In addition to monitoring the implementation of the ISSPs, the leaders will work with the staff to create celebrations for staff. Creating small frequent wins helps build staff morale and authentic buy-in. Leaders must be explicit in assisting stakeholders in understanding how short-term wins relate to long-term goals. According to the Minnesota Department of Education's *Change Leadership: A Guide for School Leaders* (2019), short-term wins:

- Can demonstrate the viability of the vision guiding the change
- Can show that the change effort is actually worth the time and resources that have been invested
- Should be celebrated along with the emphasis on the long-term goals. (p. 18)

Stakeholders will work together to develop a positive behavior program for the adults. Stakeholders will include criteria for recognition such as staff member who conducted most mentoring sessions for the month; staff member whose mentees' attendance improved the most for the month; or staff member whose mentees earned the most credits for the month. The recognition could be something as simple as a shout-out on the morning show, a spotlight in the school's monthly newsletter, recognition on the school's website and social media platforms, or an extra planning period with the

principal providing classroom coverage. The principal could ask students to write thank you cards to personnel that include why the student is thanking the staff member. For whole group recognition, the principal could deliver ice cream sandwiches to the staff.

Sustain Success Through Reflective Practices

Collecting and analyzing data will be a practice to ensure there is continuous improvement. All stakeholders will be involved in the strategic planning process and encouraged to express their views on all aspects of the ISSP process. Through the active involvement of all stakeholders, there should be a sense of community. Building a community of learners will lead to internal accountability, conditions that increase the likelihood that people will be accountable for themselves and to the group (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 109).

The goal of implementing change is that the change is meaningful, effective, and sustainable. Fullan and Quinn (2016) quoted Hargreaves & Shirley (2009), “Internal accountability occurs when individuals and groups willingly take on personal, professional, and collective responsibility for continuous improvement and success for all students” (p. 110). When the teams meet to review the data and analyze their practices for implementation, they will have ownership of the process and have the confidence to speak openly about their experiences. During the reflection process, new ideas will be generated, deficiencies will be addressed, and successes will be capitalized.

Conclusion

Implementing a schoolwide intervention plan to address the individual needs of underserved students will be challenging. Year one will be devoted to professional development and support to ensure all stakeholders have a thorough understanding of the

ISSPs and the benefits of complete implementation. Implementing the ISSPs with fidelity will have the potential to re-engage students in the educational process and empower them with life skills for productive lives beyond high school. As the team progresses through the strategies and action steps, the academic context, culture, conditions, and competencies will be positively impacted, leading to student success.

Chapter Seven: Implications and Policy Recommendations

I chose to conduct a program evaluation for the topic of my research because there is a need to create opportunities for teachers and students to thrive in an educational setting. Working in schools that are designed to re-engage disenfranchised students requires creativity, passion, skills, resources, and stamina. The results of this study identify systems that impede the successful implementation of a program designed to promote collaborative practices, build positive relationships between teachers and students, and empower students with the skills necessary to be productive in any arena.

Survey respondents identified unrealistic expectations from charter school authorizer leaders as a barrier. For example, the state under study requires individuals who want to start a charter school to complete an application and submit it to the school district leaders where they want to operate the charter school. Once the application is approved, the charter school governing board members and the school district governing board members enter a contract that details expectations from both parties (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Accountability and education go hand in hand. You cannot have a public education system absent of accountability (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 13). The proposed policy change does not negate accountability, rather it makes accountability relevant. When accountability measures are unreasonable, those who are on the receiving end of the expectations resent accountability. If educators want effective accountability, they need to develop conditions that maximize internal accountability – conditions that increase the likelihood that people will be accountable to themselves and to the group. Second, they need to frame and reinforce internal accountability with external

accountability – standards, expectations, transparent data, and selective interventions (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 109). My proposed policy provides all parties with the guidance to establish accountability indicators that will lead to active engagement, continuous improvement, and student success.

Policy Statement

District leaders will not use the federal graduation rate as a contractual goal with public charter schools whose purpose is to serve as a dropout prevention/dropout recovery school program. Instead, district leaders will work with charter school leaders to identify measurable contractual goals that align with the school's mission. District leaders and charter school leaders will work together to maintain high expectations and provide a high-quality, equitable educational program for charter school students.

This policy can potentially address issues revealed in the data of my study. At the time of this study, district leaders and charter school leaders worked as competitors instead of colleagues. Respondents identified that the overwhelming focus on graduating students on time according to federal guidelines was a driving force for many practices at the schools. District leaders emphasized the federal graduation rate because charter school students still counted in the district's accountability reports.

District leaders have policies that restrict students from enrolling in the schools under study until the student is not on track to graduate with their ninth-grade cohort. This policy creates a hurdle for the students and the charter school personnel. By the time most of the students enroll in the charter school, they are credit deficient, assessment deficient, and grade point average deficient. In addition to the academic challenges, most of the students have behavioral and social-emotional issues. The charter school personnel

have a twofold mission – re-engaging the students in the educational process and teaching them how to behave appropriately in an academic setting.

Students enrolling in the charters under these circumstances is not an issue for the charter school personnel. The mission and vision of the charters are to address the needs of this population of students. The conflict arises from the on-time graduation rate expectation.

Implementing my proposed policy with fidelity will benefit the school district, the charter schools, and the community. Bringing district and charter school leaders to discuss meaningful, measurable, appropriate goals will lead to relational trust. According to Fullan (2008), positive, purposeful peer interaction works effectively under three conditions:

1. When the larger values of the organization and those of the individuals and groups mesh.
2. When information and knowledge about effective practices are widely and openly shared.
3. When monitoring mechanisms are in place to detect and address ineffective actions while also identifying and consolidating effective practices. (p. 45)

Leaders will have the structure to acknowledge they all have a common goal: to provide educational opportunities for all students in the district that give them the most significant opportunity to earn a high school diploma. Since leaders will negotiate terms of the contract based on the purpose of the charter school and the needs of the students, the focus will be on implementing best practices to meet the needs of the whole child.

Analysis of Needs

Considering policy implications through four arenas, context, culture, conditions, and competencies (Wagner et al., 2006) provides a thorough analysis of needs. The six distinct disciplinary areas for a fuller understanding of the problems involved include educational, economic, social, political, legal, and moral and ethical analyses. These analyses will provide stakeholders with a depth of understanding and a framework to embrace the recommended policy change.

Educational Analysis

Lawmakers created public charter schools to provide parents with options for meeting their children's educational needs. Another role of public charter schools is to meet the needs of students who are not doing well in a traditional academic setting. Encouraging teachers to teach without the stress of meeting unattainable accountability measures imposed by the local, state, and federal authorities benefits all stakeholders.

The personnel in the charter schools under study focus on serving underserved populations of students. The students choose to attend charter schools because the traditional school setting did not work for them for one reason or another. The students were disenfranchised and did not have a sense of belonging. Clark et al. (2016) quoted the research of others about academic and psychosocial reasons for high school failure stating:

- Academic reasons for dropping out of high school included the feeling of being poorly prepared for high school and fear of being able to meet graduation requirements (Bridgeland et al., 2006), having failing grades (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Hammond et al., 2007; Shannon & Bylsma,

2006); repeating a grade (Hammond et al., 2007; Shannon & Bylsma, 2006); not being challenged intellectually through the curriculum (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Stanley & Plucker, 2008), student behavior problems (Stanley & Plucker, 2008); and school location (Smink & Schargel, 2004). Students with poor school attendance were also associated with non-completion (EWRC, 2014; Shannon & Bylsma, 2006).

- Psychosocial reasons for early school withdrawal included a poor sense of connection to the school and weak relationships with peers and school adults (Bridgeland et al., 2006; EWRC, 2014; Stanley & Plucker, 2008); low social and emotional learning levels (EWRC, 2014); and family values (EWRC, 2014; Hammond et al., 2007; Heckman & LaFontaine, 2010). Becoming a parent, caring for a family member, or needing to find work to earn money (Bridgeland et al., 2006) were cited as personal reasons for exiting school prematurely. Collectively, these risk factors were characterized as “push effects” and “pull effects” (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), 2004, p. 14) that either pushed a student out of school due to failing grades and poor curriculum or pulled a student away due to increased family responsibilities. Categorized into four domains, the areas of the individual, family, school system, and community (Hammond et al., 2007) influence a student’s risk in leaving high school without a diploma (p. 54).

As a result of research findings, government officials enacted national reform initiatives in response. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (Congress.Gov, 2001), The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (Congress.Gov, 2009), The Common Core Standards Initiative of 2014 (Nelson, 2015), and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) (U. S. Department of Education, 2022b) are all initiatives developed to mitigate the risk factors and create opportunities for all students to earn a high school diploma.

When leaders adopt my proposed policy, charter school personnel will have a better opportunity to implement all aspects of the Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSP). The ISSPs address the students' social, emotional, and academic needs. School personnel and students will be able to focus on addressing the immediate needs of the students without the time constraints of meeting an unreasonable graduation date. In addition, the mentoring component of the ISSPs will foster connectedness between an adult at the school and the students. Boston and Warren (2017) quoted Johnson (2009), stating research shows that students who report high levels of sense of belonging in the school environment experience positive educational outcomes (p. 27).

Economic Analysis

The economic impact of this policy proposal is justified because the expenses incurred will result from professional development, enrichment activities for students, and incentives for staff and students. Adopting this policy will promote opportunities for professional development. Investing in building the capacity of the staff will lead to teacher efficacy, and the return on investment has the potential to foster academic gains for students.

Respondents in the study discussed district leader practices that withheld funds from the charter schools. This policy will bring leaders together and allow transparency and a deeper understanding of how funds are allocated. These intentional positive peer interactions will build relational trust between the district and school leaders. When district leaders have a better understanding of the goals of the charter school leaders and how those goals align with district goals, resource allocations will benefit all parties to the fullest.

Social Analysis

At the time of this study, district and school-based leaders did not work as partners. Instead of leaders working together, there was a culture of competition and mistrust. District leaders are held accountable to state and federal regulations. District leaders must have practices to serve as checks and balances to ensure charter school leaders are complying and not misusing public funds. The state under study has three guiding principles for quality charter school authorization. The principals maintain high standards, uphold school autonomy, and protect student and public interests (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Charter school leaders also have guiding principles from the legislature of the state under study. The guiding principles are high standards of student achievement while increasing parental choice, the alignment of responsibility with accountability, and ensuring parents receive information on reading levels and learning gains of their children (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). In addition, according to the state under study's department of education website, charter schools are intended to improve

student learning, increase learning opportunities with particular emphasis on low-performing students and reading; and measure learning outcomes.

The proposed policy will remove the emphasis on establishing unrealistic expectations and allow district and school-based leaders to work together. Giving leaders the opportunity and the encouragement to collaborate may yield creative, innovative approaches to teaching.

Political Analysis

An elected governing board administers the three school districts under study. The respective boards hire the superintendents. The governing board members of the five charter schools under study are volunteers who applied for membership and were voted in by the other members. These leaders are responsible to the communities they serve; therefore, none of them want the appearance of lowering expectations. The new policy removes the federal graduation rate as a compliance indicator but does not negate accountability measures.

The new policy provides a framework to utilize appropriate, measurable indicators that align with the mission and vision of charter schools. Charter school leaders develop the charters with a specific mission. The schools under study specifically serve students who are not on track to graduate on time according to the federal graduation rate. The proposed policy removes a requirement that directly conflicts with the mission of the charters and includes accountability measures that align with the mission of the charters.

The district and charter school governing board members will have the opportunity to remain in good standing or gain approval from their constituents. Implementation of my policy will promote positive relationships, active engagement

from all stakeholders, and student achievement. Instructional staff will be able to focus on all students equitably and not devote a disproportionate amount of time solely to students who count for the federal graduation rate. As a result, schools have the potential to have more high school graduates.

Legal Analysis

The state under study has legislative statutes that regulate public charter schools and district sponsors. My policy aligns with current legislation. My policy requires measurable accountability indicators that promote student achievement and maintain high standards. The state under study's model program evaluation criteria aligns with the proposed policy. Graduation rates are not used as indicators in the evaluation process. The state's evaluation criteria for measuring student performance, assessment, and evaluation include:

- An understanding of academic accountability provisions and goals mandated by the state.
- An indication that the applicant will hold high expectations for student academic performance.
- Measurable goals for student academic growth and improvement.
- Promotion standards that are based on high expectations and provide clear criteria for promotion from one level to the next, and for graduation (if applicable).
- Evidence that a range of valid and reliable assessments will be used to measure student performance.

- A proposed assessment plan that is sufficient to determine whether students are making adequate progress.
- Evidence of a comprehensive and effective plan to use student achievement data to inform decisions about and adjustments to the educational program.
- Plans for sharing student performance information that will keep students and parents well informed of academic progress.
- Acknowledgement of and general plan to meet FERPA requirements (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Moral and Ethical Analysis

Every school in the United States has a vision and mission statement referencing student achievement and the goal of teaching every student. According to the U. S. Department of Education (2022a) website, President Lyndon Baines Johnson believed that full educational opportunity should be our first national goal. In 1965, Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA offered new grants to districts serving low-income students, federal grants for textbooks, funding for special education centers, and scholarships for low-income college students. Educational opportunity continues to be a national priority. President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, committing equal opportunity for all students (U. S. Department of Education, 2022b). The promise to give every child in the U. S. access to a free public education is woven into the fabric of our nation.

Implementing my policy facilitates an environment conducive to transparency, collaboration, and intrinsic motivation. This policy allows all stakeholders to be

innovative and creative. Most importantly, it allows all stakeholders to do the work they genuinely want to do. Throughout my interviews, the respondents spoke passionately about why they work at the charter schools. They do it because they love the students and want to positively impact their lives.

The status quo presents a moral dilemma for leaders and teachers because they feel they are teaching to a test and taking away from the time needed to provide students with meaningful instruction. Removing the federal graduation rate component is the first step to creating appropriate accountability measures.

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

Adopting this policy will include implications for staff relationships at the district and school levels. The rationale and intent of the policy warrant a thorough explanation. Media coverage of public charter schools often depicts a negative connotation. Since this policy requires removing the federal graduation rate for dropout prevention/dropout recovery schools, the public must understand that it is not a policy that eliminates accountability for charter school leaders.

District school board members are elected officials and are expected to represent the sentiments of their constituents. Charter school governing board members are volunteers voted in by sitting board members. They have a responsibility to uphold the best interests of the school community. Framing the policy in the context that it will provide all leaders an opportunity to work together in fulfillment of the intent of public charter school legislation in the state under study has the potential to have the district and charter school leaders recognized at the state and national levels. Correctly implementing

the policy could lead to positive relationships focused on student achievement, staff development, and building community partnerships.

School personnel can work collaboratively with their leaders, colleagues, community partners, parents, and students. Stakeholders working as a community of teachers and learners offer intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Effective change processes shape and reshape good ideas as they build capacity and ownership among participants (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 14).

Community partnerships with charter schools are a component of the ISSP. Meeting the needs of the students includes providing wraparound services for the students. The wraparound services have the potential to garner more parental involvement in the school. In addition to the wraparound services, partnering with local businesses to provide student internships is a possible outcome. Many of the students are young adults attending charter schools and being the first to graduate high school in their families. Creating business partnerships would expose students to opportunities they would not otherwise have. These opportunities have the potential to change the preconceived notions of businesspeople as well as students.

The public does not have an open invitation to come inside the school and see everything that occurs. Educators must create platforms and mediums to share the positive things that happen in schools. They must advocate for staff and students so that there is access to brighter futures for everyone who wants access. Jim Collins (2005) discussed the flywheel in his book *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*. He explained, “Success breeds support and commitment, which breeds even greater success, which breeds more support and commitment – round and around the flywheel goes. People like

to support winners” (p. 24). This policy has the potential to create an environment of success.

Another implication of adopting this policy is the student’s response. Through the ISSP process, students will take ownership of their academic journey and develop the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate life after high school. In my professional experience, I have witnessed students blossom when they are allowed to have a voice in decision-making. The students want to know the game’s rules and how to win. The teachers want to teach the students the rules of the game, and they want to see them succeed.

Conclusion

Implementing my policy has the potential to build a positive relationship between school district leaders and charter school leaders. Removing unreasonable accountability measures should lead to transparency, collaboration, and more opportunities for student success. Implementing my policy could be the blueprint for educational leaders and policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels to foster internal and external accountability, leading to continuous improvement and sustainable change.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

I chose to evaluate a program designed to reengage underserved youth in the educational process. Personnel at the five charter schools under study implemented the Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSP) at varying degrees. In my study, I provide evidence of barriers that prevent instructional leaders from delivering best practices and support to their teachers. I also discuss the importance of relational trust and collaborative practices. In this study, I show through the literature review and data that implementing all components of the ISSP will provide students and teachers with a structured approach to positively connect students to adults in the educational setting and lead to student success.

Discussion

Addressing the dropout rate in America continues to be a topic of discussion at the national, state, and local levels. Politicians draft legislation to ensure all students have access to free public education in grades pre-k through 12. The network of public charter high schools under study serves underserved youth. The students enrolled in the schools because the traditional high school setting was not working for them, and, as a result, they were not on track to graduate on time. One of the programs utilized in the schools is called Individualized Student Success Plans (ISSP). I chose to evaluate the program implementation of the ISSP because of the inconsistencies in implementation.

The program evaluation included surveys and semi-structured interviews of the leaders, teachers, and staff of the five charter schools under study. The primary research question of this study was: To what extent does the Individualized Student Success Plan

contribute to students earning their high school diploma in five public charter schools?

My related questions in this study were:

1. To what extent is there an impact when the principal oversees the implementation of the Individualized Student Success Plans?
2. To what extent is successful implementation contingent upon authentic pairing of mentor and mentee?
3. What types of professional development opportunities emerge from this research that informs the work of other teachers serving at-risk, over-aged students?

The respondents strongly believed that the ISSPs were a valuable tool to promote student success. However, through this study, I also found that there were barriers to implementation, which included a lack of knowledge of the full intent of the ISSP and intrusive practices of district leaders, which guided me to the conclusion that the context in which the schools were implementing the ISSPs needed to change. This change will allow the charter school stakeholders to implement the ISSPs with fidelity.

I determined the causes of the inconsistent implementation among the schools; therefore, meeting the purpose of the program evaluation. Principals did not fully understand the intent of the ISSP; therefore, the school performance varied according to the principal's perception of the program. The organizational change plan I described in Chapters 6 and 7 of this dissertation provides all principals with professional development on the ISSP, including the purpose, rationale, goals, and components for successful implementation. Additionally, the plan addresses issues raised by the program evaluation interviews, such as professional development, time for mentoring, shared

databases, and resources. Upon implementing the change plan, charter school personnel have the tools and necessary support to implement the ISSPs with fidelity leading to the re-engagement of students in their academic success.

My policy change addresses the inconsistent practices of district leaders. The state under study has a model contract for district leaders to implement when authorizing a charter school. At the time of this study, district leaders could decide if additional contractual goals would be required. Unfortunately, the other contractual goals for the schools under study were counterproductive because they required school leaders to devote more time outside classrooms and their school buildings.

I advocate for a policy that eliminates the additional contractual goals for charter schools whose focus is dropout prevention/dropout recovery. Charter and district leaders have the same goal of academic success for their students. The policy has the potential to build a bridge of trust between district and charter school leaders, creating pathways for success for all students.

Leadership Lessons

Through this process, I learned to conduct research to find data-driven answers. In my professional role, I work with principals in various parts of the state. I ask them questions about their work and the expectations that come along with it. Our attitudes can jade our perceptions, creating “truths” that are not always accurate. Our past experiences influence how we receive and interpret information. Negative experiences often cause skepticism or opposition to change or new directives. At the same time, positive experiences have the potential to elicit cooperation and excitement to change. I believe

the principals I work with have the best intentions at heart for their students and staff, but their actions do not always align with best practices.

The leaders have an educational model in place that schools in the network are required to implement. The principals tell me they are implementing and following the instructional program as directed. As I progressed through my research, the data confirmed my notion that that was not the case. Through my inquiry, I discovered the absence of clear direction from the organization where I serve. My study caused me to put a lens on myself and the changes I needed to make to ensure the fidelity of the educational program.

Another leadership lesson for me was the impact that politics has on our schools and the daily operations of our schools. Simultaneously to this study, there was a disconnect between the intent of the legislation and the interpretation of legislation for implementation. District sponsors' obligations include oversight of public funds expenditures. District sponsors must also ensure charter schools provide high-quality education to the students they serve. Charter school leaders have the same responsibilities. To hold charter school leaders accountable, district leaders use punitive measures when charter schools do not meet set contractual obligations and goals. The punitive nature of the relationship creates a barrier between the two groups.

When I began my study, I had a limited perspective of legislation's direct impact on every aspect of school operations. At the onset of my study, my perception was that school personnel were not implementing the evaluated program to fidelity because they did not value it enough to do so. After surveying and interviewing stakeholders, the data revealed that there were legislative mandates that resulted in policies at the district level.

Those policies pulled school personnel out of the school buildings and limited personnel's time for full implementation.

As a leader, I have a responsibility to analyze practices and policies in place to determine if they are productive or counterproductive to help educators attain the goal of student achievement. This task is not easy and requires creating an environment that welcomes authentic feedback. People who feel they cannot voice their thoughts openly without repercussions will not contribute to discussions. I vividly remember being in a leadership meeting with a school district's superintendent and other administrators. The superintendent told us that she wanted us to be open and honest and to speak up if we saw a problem or an issue that needed attention. She used the space shuttle disaster as an example to demonstrate that there were scientists who knew there were problems but were afraid to speak up, and as a result, people lost their lives.

When we progressed through the meeting, and she opened the meeting for comments, I voiced an opinion. However, I soon discovered that she did not want us to voice our real opinions when those opinions shed a negative light on district practices. As a result, the assistant superintendent summoned all secondary principals to his office during a break. When we arrived in his office, he turned to me in front of my peers and told me how inappropriate my comment was and that the superintendent was very upset. I apologized and told him it would never happen again, and I asked if I needed to apologize to the superintendent and the rest of the group when we reconvened. I did not make another statement in that forum for the remainder of my tenure in that district.

I strive not to be the leader who sends mixed messages. When I solicit feedback, I want feedback. I am not a leader who stands in front of an audience, speaking to provide

sound bites for the public or the press. It is essential to me that people have the space and opportunity to express their truth. As leaders, we are charged with the responsibility for those who are in our sphere of influence. That care includes making room for them to grow and evolve. True leaders are not threatened by those who follow them. True leaders recognize the gifts and create opportunities for the gifts to thrive. As instructional leaders, we are overseers of the most precious gifts on earth, our children. We must ensure that we create spaces for equity, growth, and success.

In the future as a leader, I will use the information and knowledge generated through this study to build bridges of trust between charter school leaders and district leaders, educate the public about the role of charter schools, and continue to be a resource for other instructional leaders. According to Gallup's (2022) Strength Finders, my number one strength is relator. I naturally develop and crave authentic relationships. Authenticity and integrity are foundational elements in leadership. Leadership embodies humility, inspiration, and focus. Good leaders act with passion and compassion that is so infectious others want to be a part of the movement. I strive to be a transparent leader working to empower those with whom I work so they can reach their fullest potential.

Conclusion

The catalyst of this program evaluation is the belief that all students deserve quality instruction. The program under study embodies research-based sound practices that promote student success. However, leaders were not utilizing the program to its fullest extent. The MyKaylas in our society need an Individualized Student Success Plan.

When we realize that we all want what is best for our children, we will work together to provide them with the best. This study enabled me to capture the barriers that

hinder maximizing instructional time, leaders working together, and the angst of educators. This study also helped me to provide a strategic action plan that only requires common sense, integrity, and passion for implementation. Nineteen-year-old MyKayla needs us to put aside our insecurities and focus on the real issue – providing a premiere educational experience for all students. The work we do must continue to evolve so that we continue to work towards meeting the needs of every student. Former First Lady Michelle Obama captured a piece of my heart in her final speech as First Lady:

I want our young people to know that they matter, that they belong. So, don't be afraid – you hear me, young people? Don't be afraid. Be focused. Be determined. Be hopeful. Be empowered. Empower yourselves with a good education, then get out there and use that education to build a country worthy of your boundless promise. Lead by example with hope, never fear. (Reilly, 2017)

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Appendix C: Interview Question Responses

Appendix D: As Is 4Cs Analysis

Appendix E: To Be 4Cs Analysis

Appendix F: Sample Mentoring Schedule

Appendix G: Strategies and Action Chart

Appendix A

Survey

Individualized Student Success Plans Survey

1. I know the purpose of the ISSP.

Yes No Maybe

2. I am actively involved in the ISSP process.

Not involved 1 2 3 4 5 Very involved

3. Students who have an ISSP are more engaged in their academic progress.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

4. I have the ability to assist students with the creation of their ISSP.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

5. I am an assigned mentor to students.

Yes No

6. I chose the students I mentor.

Yes No N/A

7. ISSPs are embedded in our school practice to assist students.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

8. Students value the ISSP.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

9. Here are my recommendations to improve the ISSP process.

**10. Are you available for a short interview as follow-up to this survey? If yes,
please provide your contact information.**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been employed at the school/ESP?
2. What are the strengths of the ISSPs?
3. What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs?
4. What are barriers to implementation of the ISSPs?
5. How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?
6. Do all students have an ISSP? If not, why not?
7. What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ISSP process?
8. Please explain the mentoring portion of the ISSP process.

Appendix C

Interview Question Responses

Interview Question	How long have you been employed at the school/ESP?	What are the strengths of the ISSPs?	What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs?	What are barriers to implementation of the ISSPs?	How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?	Do all students have an ISSP? If not, why not?	What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ISSP process?	Please explain the mentoring portion of the ISSP process. How is it used? Is there a mentoring portion?
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8. and follow-up questions
INTERVIEW #1 Principal One	Since July 2012 principal since 2016	It gives a visual for the kids to go by. Almost like a Bible. It lets them know what they've done and what they need to do. A drawback is that they lose them. It's a good talking point for parents to see. This is what parents request. I don't mind taking time out of my day to let them know where they are.	Credit checks – upon orientation. Every new kid is given an ISSP from the principal. I tell them here is where you are now. For already enrolled students, they sign up with the administrative assistant to meet with me to get an ISSP. I'm trying to involve the teachers more in the process. All of the credit checks fall on me. In the past, we used to divide the students up by alpha order to meet with me for credit checks. You get a credit check at least 3 times per year. We teach them responsibility. Our management company CEO has created a new system to input credits. That system is not working for me, so I still use the old system. I have a binder in my office, and if a student or teacher needs it, they can make a copy. I email the credit check out to all staff including the SRO so that everyone has a copy.	If transfer credits haven't come in on time from the previous school. We take the student's word, but until the records come in we aren't sure if the schedule is correct. If the kids lose them, that creates double and triple work. We are working to create a place where students can access their credit check. I have to go into Focus and get information when students lose their credit check. Time is a barrier, but I can work with that. Kids that transfer in district, their credits are in Focus but students who transfer from out of district or out of state I have to manually input the credits. Keeping up with testing requirements is difficult. The school district has so many demands on the school on me.	I need to update the process and make it more efficient for all of the staff. Train my staff to know how to decipher a transcript. Setting time aside to make sure we complete one for every student at the beginning of the year. Create a system that students know on specific days another staff member will do a credit check. I thought about thinking about setting aside time in August to have my staff do credit checks. Getting the whole staff to be involved in the process. Not every student can see every kid because they don't have access in Focus. Involving parents in the process. In addition to parent night. I told my staff they should be making more parental contact.	It's the monthly cohort meeting where we literally, I mean LITERAL -LY, go over EACH COHORT student. Some years it's over 100 kids in the cohort.	They have a little bit of voice in courses (electives) they want to take. I put all kids on an 18 credit option, but they can take more electives if they like to earn a 24 credit option diploma.	Used for progress reports with printouts from Apex Follow-up: Is there a mentoring portion? Yes, every adult is assigned to a student, and they are to monitor the progress of the students. They go over the credit checks and Apex. They are to encourage students to be more vocal with their needs with their teachers. Some students are still shy (mainly the ESE students). Teachers are encouraging students to speak up for themselves and take ownership of their education. What support do you need from the ESP? System where it's user friendly. I know that there have been attempts to do that. For our district it's not clicking [REDACTED] needs some polishing. If you print a credit check directly from [REDACTED] it's still not accurate. Allow parents to have access. That would be amazing. If there was something like that in Apex, that would be amazing. I love [REDACTED] in some areas. [REDACTED] needs to be more user friendly. There is a lapse in time between when teachers enter the grade and when the grade is available to the principal. When the Google form was used it was instantaneous. If the system is not user friendly, it does not work. Parents sign off when they receive a copy of the credit check. I like the process of the pen and paper because it gives me a chance to sit down and meet with the kids. You get to know them a whole lot better and when you're talking they are so engaged. If a kid never asks me for a credit check, I reach out to them. I want it to be a school-wide initiative.

Interview Question	How long have you been employed at the school/ESP?	What are the strengths of the ISSPs?	What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs?	What are barriers to implementation of the ISSPs?	How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?	Do all students have an ISSP? If not, why not?	What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ISSP process?	Please explain the mentoring portion of the ISSP process. How is it used? Is there a mentoring portion?
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8. and follow-up questions
INTERVIEW #2 Principal Two	Going on 8 years	Because of the way we have to put everything in the district system, and we have to have everything for district monitoring gives students a roadmap to a high school diploma. For us, it's a start to what we are going to do to assist the student. Adult profile and a student profile. We do it by hand. We tried doing it electronically, and the students had a hard time interpreting the data. Students could not translate. It's a more personal touch, and it helps digest.	Adult-to-adult communication – I took what was there when I first came back and brushed it up. Me training the staff how to look at it and me training the grad coach how to put it together. That part assists the entire team. Helps set up the advisories – we don't want to go into the classroom and take away from instructional time. Good communication with adult to student. Good communication with student to parent.	Teacher attendance this year – can't run an advisory if you're absent. You're also not calling kids if you're not there. Testing schedule – the exorbitant amount of testing we have to do – we have to take the entire window. Student attendance is the overarching umbrella. District always pulling me out of the building or adding something else for compliance.	We have yet to find a more comprehensive electronic method to help students understand [REDACTED] is a start. But kids still don't completely understand. Electronic course catalog. Trying to figure out a way to get our database a little more diverse. The kids are used to seeing the courses. We have to do a better job of getting students to retain the information. Kids lose the sheet and keep coming back to us asking us what they need. We're getting more kids to go to college due to the ISSPs and the college summit program.	Do you see students take ownership of the ISSP? Yes, if a student is invested in their education, they take ownership of the ISSP. It's like an award for them. Students can guess their GPAs. It's worked as an incentive for them. It's a motivating factor for them to fill up the grid with grades. Once they get in a rhythm, they see the progress. All students receive an ISSP. That's how we are also able to leverage early graduates. The students also look at the Apex dashboard and compare the two.	What role do the teachers play? They are the instructional leaders in the process. Teachers meet with students every Wednesday 4th period to discuss ISSP. They meet with every student during that time. They offer assistance for students to access information for what happens after high school. We use our strengths. Are parents involved in ISSP process? Yes, the first parent information meeting Ms. A goes over the ISSP. Parents are able to request their own ISSP. Our parents have not historically been involved in their student's education. Looking at transcripts is difficult for students and parents. The ISSP simplifies the information for the parent. We put a check mark if the student did not pass instead of an F. We try to use positive affirmations. It's the basis for our a la carte schedule. I tried to do scheduling without using the ISSP, and it took longer. It's the preliminary basis for Tier 3 interventions.	Give an example of a district requirement that takes away time from you that could be spent assisting teachers and students. Jumping through hoops just to enroll a student when district schools can do it on their own, gathering documents for site visits twice a year and then being audited by the district for FTE on top of that. It just seems like a lot of superfluous and repetitive proving that we do our jobs. I have a lot more if you want more than one.

Interview Question	How long have you been employed at the school/ESP?	What are the strengths of the ISSPs?	What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs?	What are barriers to implementation of the ISSPs?	How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?	Do all students have an ISSP? If not, why not?	What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ISSP process?	Please explain the mentoring portion of the ISSP process. How is it used? Is there a mentoring portion?
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8. and follow-up questions
INTERVIEW #3 Principal Three	Since 2014	I think the biggest strength is that they play a huge part in students planning their future. I tell my students it's very difficult to have a goal if you don't have a plan. You don't know how to set time schedules – long term and short term – help plan their future and set goals	I think the most influential process is them (students) being able to sit down with someone one on one and discuss their needs. At the high school, they get lost in the shuffle because guidance counselors have so many kids to meet with. we are a small school, so they get to sit down with parents when available to discuss what they need to get their high school diploma.	Barriers – one of the biggest barriers is time. It takes time to sit down and get it done. When you don't sit down with the student – not taking time to sit down and go over the ISSP with the student so that they are well aware of what's needed. When parents aren't involved in the ISSP, that's a barrier. Oftentimes when students get to us, the parents feel like this is it, and we have to re-engage the parents as well. Low student interest is another barrier. Every kid that comes to us knows that this is an opportunity for them to get it right. But they are still not 100% on board to getting a high school diploma.	Consistency. It's not a one and done – ISSPs need to be reviewed at least monthly, preferably bi-weekly. There must be follow-up to ensure that they are accurate and play a part in students' success.	All students have an ISSP.	No answer (see 8. and follow-up)	<p>What adults are involved in the process?</p> <p>Graduation coach who works with cohort students ESE/AP (instructional leader) – meet with underclassmen within 30 days of students enrolling in Lone Star.</p> <p>Principal – I do most of the parent conferences so that's another opportunity that I have to meet with the student and the parent for review.</p> <p>Teachers do progress monitoring bi-weekly with their homeroom students – discuss progress in Apex and check off completions as a goal met.</p> <p>How do teachers feel?</p> <p>They find them useful. They need them in order to do progress monitoring. They use them for scheduling. Guide to help keep the students on track. Teachers are able to identify what specific course needs students have.</p> <p>How do students feel?</p> <p>Oftentimes they lose them – 4 copies (student, teacher, administrator, and parent). Students do request them when they lose them. If their interest is low they don't keep up with them. We use the ISSP to keep students engaged. So many students come to us not knowing what they need to do to meet graduation requirements. I like that we do them because it's personable for the students.</p> <p>No student interest – what do you do?</p> <p>We try to get the parent involved. We keep trying to encourage them. We give incentives to students for meeting their goals – all goals are focused on the ISSP. Keep them encouraged and moving forward.</p> <p>It's always important to have a plan. The ISSP is a plan, it's a roadmap. It's the best thing we can do to help students have a plan. We do see the benefits of the ISSP.</p>

Interview Question	How long have you been employed at the school/ISSP?	What are the strengths of the ISSPs?	What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs?	What are barriers to implementation of the ISSPs?	How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?	Do all students have an ISSP? If not, why not?	What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ISSP process?	Please explain the mentoring portion of the ISSP process. How is it used? Is there a mentoring portion?
	1	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8. and follow-up questions
INTERVIEW #4 Graduation Coach/Admin Designee/Dean	June 2019	<p>I really like the ISSP because it gives me a glance at the students so that I can see here's what you need, here's what you have. Some days I have time to sit and talk, and we can work out a good plan. Most times I say give me a minute let me give you a copy of your ISSP. I like our new design of the ISSP at [REDACTED]. I redesigned it so that the student can easily see what they have left to do get their diploma. I give them a learning ISSP. I fill in grades and say it needs to look like this. Look at yours and look at this. When yours looks like this you are finished. I would like to go to a computerized ISSP (an electronic ISSP). I would like to fill out the ISSP digitally and make it simple. Everything in black is what you came with and everything in red is what you did this year. We are more computerized now. The students chat me now asking questions. I would like to see a digital ISSP. You email it to me, and I can email it back and bam there you go. Simple communication between the student and teacher and student and grad coach. I want the ISSP to be locked. I want it to be available to the principal, grad coach, and admin personnel only. We're still handwriting the ISSPs. I like fail safes. I do believe in moving us forward into the 21st century. I'm old school so I'm probably still going to have a hard copy.</p>	<p>When Focus works right and I can copy all the grades and transmit them to the ISSP, it's lovely. I would like to see Focus talk to our ISSP. Quick at a glance. I like the design of it. I like the fact ... me and Mrs. M can trade ISSPs back and forth. I like that; more than one person can make changes. Good back up is always positive.</p>	<p>Sending schools do not have all information in Focus so the information is missing on the transcript. Focus does not communicate with our ISSP. If it did then the update would be instantaneous, and students would not repeat courses they don't need. Not digital so that students can access it themselves. That would cut down on students chatting with me and asking me to input the next course for them. Instead, it would be good if students were contacting me to tell me what they need next. I have to stop doing what I'm doing and go look up what class the student is in and review the transcript. We could have easy access to it. I use the registrar as well because she can talk to the student to let them know what they need. If it was electronic, students would not have to wait for me to get an answer.</p>	<p>I redesigned the form. I type in the courses students need. I redesigned the back of the form to include all testing so that students can see all testing. They see what tests they have taken and what they need to do to pass the test. If I put a P, that means you passed. If I put a number, that means the student did not pass and they know how far away they are from passing. Currently, passing scores are not indicated on the form. Would like to add passing scores; no room.</p>	<p>Yes, all are involved in the ISSP process. Teachers use the ISSPs to monitor course progression. Teachers are able to use the information to assist students. The math teacher is the only teacher that I'm aware of that uses the ISSP in that manner.</p>	<p>Advisory – use ISSPs to meet with students to discuss remaining graduation requirements I added their GPAs, how many classes they have left to go. I surveyed students and asked them what they wanted to see on the ISSP. I put on there what program they are in A or R (24 or 18 credits).</p>	<p>Student role in developing ISSP: I asked them what they would like to see on it, and I went from their suggestions.</p>

Interview Question	How long have you been employed at the school/ESP?	What are the strengths of the ISSPs?	What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs?	What are barriers to implementation of the ISSPs?	How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?	Do all students have an ISSP? If not, why not?	What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ISSP process?	Please explain the mentoring portion of the ISSP process
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8. and follow-up
INTERVIEW #5 Teacher One	This will be my third year	The kids love visuals. They love knowing exactly how many credits they need if they have passed their tests. They love seeing their GPAs. I had a student today who was asking what she needed, and she had her ISSP, and she was checking off what she has already completed. She was super excited. The paper copy is a great visual. We did add having their username on the paper, so that definitely helped. It's good to have the paper copy because tech does act up on us. It's a really good tool for the kids and for the adults as well. As you know, the kids sometimes have taken 20 electives and we can show them why they still don't have their diploma. The kids actually like physical things to hold in their hands. If you make it too technological, they don't like it. It's portable, they can touch, visualize, count up. They understand it.	Actually, transcribing it with my team. I feel it's important for each teacher to be taught the process. It was a team building activity for all of us to be together and learn how to interpret. We do it as a team and understand as a team how the credits work and what students need. I love the collaboration. I loved learning the process. I love being able to say I understand, and I know what counts as an elective and what doesn't. It's a good communicative tool for teachers and the kids. It's good to be able to see it and understand it. We can see GPAs and we know if kids need to take more classes so that they can graduate.	Paper copy is great; however, you use a lot of paper every year. It's a lot to keep up with. Every time we enroll a new kid it's a lot of upkeep. It's good to have a digital version so that you can go in and look at it. If no one is managing the digital side, it creates a grey area. I know this year we rolled out with the new [REDACTED] in Filemaker. I hate as a teacher right now being asked how many credits I need. It's very time consuming to look up courses in Focus. If you are going to have two systems, they need to be managed properly. I know the intent was that everyone could have access. In Filemaker only one person can work on a student at a time so you may forget to go back and enter information. If we are going to use the digital, it needs to work properly. The kids get very forgetful. I know there is a paper copy being managed but it makes me as a teacher very ineffective. We need to get better at making sure everybody has accurate information. If one system is not finished or complete, we need something else. I don't really see a downfall to the ISSP. The ISSP is there to give the kid a roadmap as to where they stand academically. The information they need is there for them. It's easy for students to compare their course history from the ISSP with their Apex dashboard. I think the mode of the ISSP needs to be improved.	It depends on my leadership – how much they want to collaborate on the process. I love learning new things and I love helping. I've learned the process. I feel very confident. I could help the workload when it comes to building scheduling and what they already have earned and what they need. If you understand the full reach of the ISSP, I can tell a kid even if you pull straight As, you will still need to take extra courses because your GPA is low. Kids want to know where they are at, and they are not tracking it for themselves. If you spread the wealth and spread your knowledge it makes me a great ally. It makes me a resource for the kids. It makes me a better educator. I'm not just focused on reading and not just what I'm in charge of specifically.	This is their academic jacket. They have to take the information and do the work. If we are going to train them to be responsible, we should give them a little bit more of a choice in the courses they take, so that they take more initiative and an active role in the ISSP. If it's too boring and too work driven they are going to lose interest. Students are taking more of a passive role.	Advisories – nothing on the ISSP about personal goals or career based interests. We are supposed to be teaching them real world real life application. Have kids really stopped to think about what they want in life – real goals? The ISSP is what sets us apart from other schools. Being able to provide a personalized ISSP to students so that they can track their credits and GPA. That makes us really special because you don't get that anywhere else. The personalized ISSP is not just giving you a schedule. It's telling you how you can accelerate yourself and catch up or graduate early. It makes the kids feel seen and addressed.	No answer

Interview Question	How long have you been employed at the school/ESP?	What are the strengths of the ISSPs?	What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs?	What are barriers to implementation of the ISSPs?	How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?	Do all students have an ISSP? If not, why not?	What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ISSP process?	Please explain the mentoring portion of the ISSP process.
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8. and follow-up
INTERVIEW #6 Teacher Two	First year	Not sure what an ISSP is. Recognize that there is some sort of issues. First step to identify the problem and the fact that there is a plan shows that the problem has been identified and working towards solutions.	Recognizing the need for it is the biggest part.	Students not having a full say in the plan. Families not being engaged in the development of the plan. That diminishes investment. If you didn't help with development, then you are less likely to go along with the plan.	Unless they are my student, I don't really have a role in it. I primarily work with students who have ISSPs, so I'm not very involved. Someone may come to me and ask for suggestions, but I don't play a major role.	Not aware	Have a team that works on just ISSP. Find different staff members that will work together to find ideas of what would work and be best for students.	Have you seen the ISSPs? No, I haven't. Yes, beneficial for all students. Sometimes we get students who only have 4 credits, but it takes them forever to get there. As a new employee, plan for development and implementation.

Interview Question	How long have you been employed at the school/ESP?	What are the strengths of the ISSPs?	What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs?	What are barriers to implementation of the ISSPs?	How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?	Do all students have an ISSP? If not, why not?	What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ISSP process?	Please explain the mentoring portion of the ISSP process. How is it used? Is there a mentoring portion?
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8. and follow-up questions
INTERVIEW #7 Teacher Three (Teacher and Assistant Principal)	5 years	As long as the student and teacher are knowledgeable about what is on the plan, the plan can be successful. Sometimes the teachers may not know because of how our enrollment works. We have tried to divide the students amongst the teachers as mentors, so that they have someone to go to discuss graduation progress. Meeting consistently is important.	Have the conversation with the student, so that they understand. We have the mini grad checker; they can go and review the data wall whenever they need. I tell my students whenever they complete a credit they need to check it off on their sheet, and then we go to the data wall and check it off together.	Students don't understand sometimes when the teacher explains. We need to do more teacher training so that teachers have a better understanding of the credit checks. When teachers don't have a solid foundation, it's difficult for them to relay information to the student. Another barrier is attendance. Attendance issues and inconsistencies, so they are not able to work the plan. School communication where parents/guardians are made aware on a consistent basis – open communication. So that we don't get to operation graduation and parents find out the student needs 6 credits and less than 90 days left. Everybody needs to be involved in the conversation.	Make sure that the leadership team has a solid foundation, a plan for implementation I'm from a world of what doesn't get monitored doesn't get done.		More consistent parent meetings in the evening and afternoon (more than twice a year). Teachers should have a better foundation of what's being expected of their students. We are having conversations with students, and teachers are not involved	Principal, assistant principal, and registrar – random meetings with students – for me I'm at the door speaking with students daily – it may be weekly or bi-weekly. Progress monitoring – course completion rate. What have you been doing to prepare for assessments, progress in Achieve 3000 and Khan Academy? Discussing previous test results, and plan for moving forward. Set goals for course completion rates – deadlines, calendar goals. Role of student. No input – more of this is what you need so this is what you have to do. They don't have any options. There is no variety. They have no stake because they really don't have any say in their plan.

Interview Question	How long have you been employed at the school/ESP?	What are the strengths of the ISSPs?	What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ISSPs?	What are barriers to implementation of the ISSPs?	How could you contribute to the success of the ISSPs?	Do all students have an ISSP? If not, why not?	What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ISSP process?	Please explain the mentoring portion of the ISSP process. How is it used? Is there a mentoring portion?
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8. and follow-up questions
INTERVIEW #8 Teacher Four	First year	Easier to work a path if you know where you want to go. When you have goals. When you allow the students to be involved, that's what you need. You are allowing the students where they need to go on a specific path.	All the teachers have the transcripts for the students. We do some coaching with the students. We are responsible for talking with the students periodically. We try to involve the students because they need to know what they need to do to complete the academics. We also have the opportunity to talk with other teachers. We discuss student performance.	Sometimes the students are the barriers. I wonder if the student wants the education. They are close, but they waste time. It seems like they don't want to be in school. Probably the environment where they live. They feel safe here and not there. If they complete their high school, then where are they going to go? How are they going to adjust?	Try to be better prepared to answer questions to help them. To continue doing the coaching; show interest in them.	Just seniors and super seniors.		Is there anything else included on the ISSP besides credits and GPA? No We try to show more interest, more love – some kids are living on their own – how can we help them not just in school but outside of school?

Interview Question	How long have you been employed at the school/ESSP?	What are the strengths of the ESSPs?	What factors do you think positively impact the implementation of the ESSPs?	What are barriers to implementation of the ESSPs?	How could you contribute to the success of the ESSPs?	Do all students have an ESSP? If not, why not?	What do you think are things that can be done to enhance the ESSP process?	Please explain the mentoring portion of the ESSP process. How is it used? Is there a mentoring portion?
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8. and follow-up questions
INTERVIEW #9 Registrar (she thought we were discussing Individual Education Plans or IEPs)	5 years	It's individualized. It's created for that individual student to help them be successful. Everything is not cookie-cutter. Some students learn different. You have your different styles of learning so when you differentiate the success plans, you address the different needs of the students. It's geared towards the needs of that individual student. You have some students who learn visually and some who can close their eyes and visualize what the teacher is saying. When you sit down with the students who you know aren't grasping what you're teaching, you can help them individually. When you have that individual plan, and you have these three students who need phonics, they succeed because they had that one-on-one and they can function. You have teachers who have sat down and done the individual plans. Sitting a student on the computer they can get lost. You are setting students up for success no matter the tier they are on. Sometimes students can be gifted and struggling. You have to find where the student is and create the plan for student success.	You might have to collaborate with other teachers and see what works in their class for the student. One person can't do it alone. You are not with the child all the time. For the plan to be successful you have to collaborate with each other. You need the support. You need to have procedures and schedules put in place. Even pairing students up with other students. Collaboration in different forms. Also collaborating at home. Family support is important. Maybe a phone call out to mom. Informing parent that ESSP is being created and ask parent to help promote with us his success and here's how you do that. Just be there to support your student.	Trial and error because you don't know what's going to work. You can plan and be so excited and bring it to the student, and it doesn't work. You have to know how to introduce the ESSP to the student and make it doable and achievable. You can't give the student a college-bound plan that is over their head. You have to follow the curriculum. You have to make it achievable by following where the student should be. You don't want to make it overwhelming. Make it achievable.	I think it's the ESE teacher, the principal, and classroom teacher who create the ESSPs together. I've seen the teachers collaborate and pull together information to help the students. The collaboration of the teachers is important because you can't have just one person doing it. Having the knowledge base to come in and help. Our school is unique because we are a dropout prevention school. Meeting the individual needs of the ESE students – whatever the disability – they are not capable of learning on the same level as a non-ESE student.	No answer	No answer	Student's role: Students play an important role – they have an accepted role, and they try to achieve those goals because they realize the plan is set up for them to be successful. Once again it goes back to collaboration. Once you explain to the student that this is to help them, and we want them to succeed. We have sat down as a group. Ask the student do they agree with the plan. Sometimes students say yes and sometimes they do not agree and want to just stay on the computer. Collaborate with the student to make sure they are ok. Parent involvement: If parents aren't there in the room, they are on the phone. It's a collaboration. The parents have to be involved. Parents are very important. I like the idea and the concept of ESSPs because a lot of students can't learn on a regular level and it's important to help them. It helps keep students from slipping through the cracks. It helps the teacher recognize when a student is falling behind. It's important to have ESSPs, and it's important to have teachers be involved, not just being a babysitter and not just sitting there. Being an educator is a passion. The committee is crucial to student success.

Appendix D

As Is 4Cs Analysis

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Inconsistent implementation of Individualized Student Success Plans yields varying degrees of active student engagement and connections with adults in the academic setting.

“As Is” 4 Cs Analysis for Mission Possible: Collaborative Practice Promoting Student Success

CONTEXT

- Five public charter high schools
- All schools qualify as Title I schools
- Veteran principals in all schools
- Stable instructional staff at three of the five schools
- Educational Service Provider administrators have 20+ years’ experience
- Us vs. Them mentality between the district and the charter schools

CULTURE

- Three schools - strong collaborative structures between principals and staff
- Two schools – lack collaborative structure between principals and staff

CONDITIONS

- Lack of knowledge of purpose of the ISSP
- Limited involvement of stakeholders
- Complicated and timely process to keep ISSPs updated
- Educational Service Provider not providing enough support to school personnel to maintain ISSPs

COMPETENCIES

- All schools utilize ISSPs to track students’ graduation requirements
- ISSPs not used to help students develop problem solving skills
- Building positive relationships with students is a foundational practice

Appendix E

To Be 4Cs Analysis

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Consistent implementation of Individualized Student Success Plans to yield active student engagement through connections with adults in the academic setting evidenced by student achievement and high school graduation.

“To Be” 4 Cs Analysis for Mission Possible: Collaborative Practice Promoting Student Success

FUTURE CONTEXTS

- Five public charter high schools
- All schools qualify as Title I schools
- Veteran principals in all schools
- Stable instructional staff at all five schools
- Educational Service Provider administrators have 20+ years’ experience
- District sponsors work in partnership with the charter schools sharing resources (human and financial)

FUTURE CULTURE

- Strong collaborative structures between principals and staff
- Peers connected with purpose
- Families actively involved in the educational process and supportive of students and staff
- Students come to school to learn

FUTURE CONDITIONS

- All stakeholders understand the purpose of the ISSP
- All stakeholders actively engaged in the ISSP process
- Effective process developed and implemented to keep ISSPs updated
- Educational Service Provider provides adequate support to school personnel to maintain ISSPs

FUTURE COMPETENCIES

- All leaders have the skills to lead necessary change
- All stakeholders have the capacity to mentor students
- All schools utilize ISSPs to track students’ graduation requirements
- ISSP used to help students develop problem solving skills
- Building positive relationships with students is a foundational practice

Appendix F

Sample Mentoring Schedule

Staff Workday: 7:15 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Session A Students: 7:30 a.m. – 12:34 p.m.

Session B Students: 9:32 a.m. – 2:36 p.m.

Periods	1 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.	2 8:31 a.m. – 9:31 a.m.	3 9:32 a.m. – 10:32 a.m.	4 10:33 a.m. – 11:33 a.m.	5 11:34 a.m. – 12:34 p.m.	6 12:35 p.m. – 1:35 p.m.	7 1:36 p.m. – 2:36 p.m.
Teacher 1 ELA		T/R mentoring Para supervising students		Planning Lunch			
Teacher 2 Electives			T/R mentoring Para supervising students			Planning Lunch	
Teacher 3 Math				T/R mentoring Para supervising students	Planning Lunch		
Teacher 4 Social Science				Planning Lunch	T/R mentoring Para supervising students		
Teacher 5 Science					Planning Lunch	T/R mentoring Para supervising students	

- Tuesdays and Thursdays are mentoring days** – mentors will spend approximately 10 minutes conducting one-on-one mentoring with their mentees using the ISSP form as a guide for discussions. A paraprofessional will be in the classroom supervising students while the teacher conducts mentoring sessions.
- Progress Monitoring** meetings will be conducted every second Wednesday of the month from 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- Professional Learning Community (PLC)** meetings will be conducted every first and third Wednesday of the month from 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Appendix G

Strategies and Action Chart

Strategies	Actions
<p style="text-align: center;">Empower stakeholders with knowledge</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ESP team will create a detailed white paper outlining the purpose, rationale, goals, and components of the Individualized Student Success Plans 2. ESP instructional leader coach will schedule professional development sessions with the principals <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. First meeting to reintroduce the ISSP to principals b. Follow-up meetings to assess the needs of individuals at each school 3. Professional development sessions will be scheduled for school staff <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Thoroughly go over the ISSP process b. Mentoring training c. High school diploma requirements training d. Progress Monitoring format
<p style="text-align: center;">Remove barriers to success</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a master schedule with time built in for mentoring and collective progress monitoring 2. Redesign the ISSP form for specificity and ease of use 3. Develop and implement a shared database so that all staff has access to relevant student information 4. Utilize grant funds and donations to develop incentives for students and staff <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Field trips to businesses, colleges, and universities b. Stipends for employees 5. Create a culture that encourages and welcomes input from all stakeholders so that everyone has ownership in the process
<p style="text-align: center;">Inspect expectations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ESP instructional leader coach will include the ISSP process as a component of the monthly monitoring tool used with principals throughout the year 2. ESP instructional leader coach will work with principals to develop a monitoring tool to use with staff to monitor the ISSP process 3. ESP team will create methods to praise staff members for implementation and ongoing monitoring
<p style="text-align: center;">Sustain success through reflective practices</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include data from the ISSPs in the data review/strategic planning meetings at the beginning, middle, and end of the year 2. Encourage all stakeholders to provide meaningful feedback about the ISSP process 3. Emphasize the process is alive and everchanging to meet the needs of the students, faculty, staff, and administration