Holistic Community Change, the Developmental Assets and Positive Youth Outcomes

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Healthy Youth Development of Erie County

- Susan Hirt Hagen Center for Organizational Research and Evaluation (CORE), Penn State Erie, The Behrend College
  - Founded in 1998 through the generosity of Susan Hirt Hagen
    - Prevention Research & Evaluation (CORE)
    - Community Outreach (HYD)

- Erie County Policy & Planning Council
  - Response to Teen Pregnancy
  - 40 Asset Model- Increasing protective factors to buffer risk factors in youth
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  • Communications Assistant
HYD Task Forces

HYD Advisory Board

Union City School District
- Youth Development Organizations

Strong Vincent H.S., Erie
- Media
- Parents
- Religious
- Schools/Risky Behaviors
- Youth Board
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention
“What are the 40 Assets?”

- Protective factors that buffer youth from risk
- Based on research studies
- Family members, friends, activities, sports, teachers, mentors, faith community members
40 Developmental Assets
Eight Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Assets</th>
<th>Internal Assets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Support</td>
<td>5. Commitment to Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Empowerment</td>
<td>6. Positive Values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.Search-Institute.org
Assets Protect Youth from Alcohol Use

(Based on survey of 150,000 students in grades 6-12; ages 11-18)
http://www.Search-Institute.org
Assets Protect Youth from Violence

(Based on survey of 150,000 students in grades 6-12; ages 11-18)
http://www.Search-Institute.org
Assets Protect Youth from Sexual Activity

(Based on survey of 150,000 students in grades 6-12; ages 11-18)
http://www.Search-Institute.org
Assets Boost Academic GPA

(Based on survey of 150,000 students in grades 6-12; ages 11-18)
http://www.Search-Institute.org
Success in School
(Mostly A’s on Report Card)

(Based on survey of 150,000 students in grades 6-12; ages 11-18)
http://www.Search-Institute.org
Union City *Sustained* Healthy Youth Development and Dropout/Truancy Prevention
Do not go further unless, you ...
...Dare to Dream the Impossible Dream!

And have the desire for total systemic change!

- The full support of:
  - The leadership (Superintendent, Principals)
  - Faculty & staff

- Long-term commitment to do whatever it takes

- Willingness to admit when it’s not working and adjust accordingly

- This is an initiative, not a program!
Background

- Seven years ago we created the Union City Sustained Healthy Youth Development Council.

- Shortly thereafter, we adopted the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets.

- Six years ago, we received a grant from United Way of Erie County for $50,000 per year to begin...
The Union City Dropout/Truancy Prevention Project.

- Our initial proposal was to overhaul the high school with the idea that we work **one youth at a time**, and that **every youth matters**. Within the past three years, we have expanded to cover K – 12 grades.

- Our first step was to fully and honestly assess our current systems. What we found was ...
• Attendance policy was not enforced.
• No hearings for truancy or attendance.
• Students could miss 40+ days and still pass.
• No penalty in extra-curricular activities for tardiness.
• No extra support staff.
• No additional funding sources.
• A NUMBER OF STUDENTS WERE NOT CONNECTED TO THE SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY
How did we make it better?
Increased In-School Activities/Connections
After school tutoring/Clubs targeting ‘unconnected students’ – We asked them what they would like to do

- Community Mentoring (Senior Citizens)
- Staff and Peer Mentoring
- Peer Educator Group
- Chess Club/Tournament
- Gold Club Card
- 8th Grade Career Promotion Night
- Middle School Fun Night
- Second Mile Leadership

... to name a few of the 100-plus activities now offered
Community Agencies

- Union City Family Support Center
- Union City Girl Scouts
- Adagio Power Up Nutrition
- Adagio Health
- L8O (Community Youth Group)
- Pyramid (Drug and Alcohol Prevention Programming)
- Smiles Dental Van/Union City Family Dentistry
- Thurston House
- Safe Horizons
Increased School to Community Activities/Connections
Main Street Planting

Peer Educating
Locks of Love Donation
Increased Community to School Connections
L8O Community Youth Group

Community Arts Program
Now to
Specific Policy Changes
Addressing
Dropout and Truancy Prevention
New Attendance Policy

- For students who are of compulsory school age, five days of total absence or three (3) days of unlawful absences will necessitate a warning notice to be sent in accordance with Section 1333 of the School Code.

- All subsequent absences will result in the filing of a complaint for court action with the district magistrate.

- For purposes of this policy, **compulsory school age** shall mean the period of a child's life from the time the child's parents elect to have the child enter school, which shall be no later than the age of eight (8) years, until the age of seventeen (17) years. Administrative discretion will be used in all cases.
PROCEDURE CHANGES

Class attendance policy:

• Two criteria must be met in order to pass each class: coursework and attendance.

• A high school student shall not be granted credit for a course if absences from class total more than 7 absences a quarter.

• A student is considered absent if they miss the class, or if they miss 10 or more minutes of the class period unexcused.

• The individual teacher’s attendance will stand as the official attendance for that class. Because of lateness or early dismissals, attendance often varies from class to class.

• An appeals procedure exists for students who believe there are extenuating circumstances for their absences. Forms are available in the main office.
Additional Programming/Staff

1. Associate Coordinator for Healthy Youth Development
2. Social Worker
3. Resource Officer
4. Truancy Task Force
5. Strict Five-Day Policy
6. Truancy
7. SAP & ESAP
8. District Justice Cooperation:
   Court Orders/Jail Terms/
   Creative Sentencing-cell phones, pets
Effects

- Lowered dropout rate/truancy
- Increased student participation in extra-curricular activities
- Additional open relationships between students and staff
  - Mentoring relationships
- Additional open relationships between students and community members
  - Higher student attendance/participation at community events
- Increased cooperation from the School Board and Community
  - Higher attendance of School Board members and Community members at student functions
- Improved school spirit
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Truancy Hearings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percentage Decline in Chronic Truancy
(40 or more missed days)

- Note: 2004-2005 is baseline year. Mean = Mean decrease from baseline year.
Percentage Decline in Extreme Chronic Truancy (60 or more missed days)

- Note: 2004-2005 is baseline year. Mean = Mean decrease from baseline year.
Percentage Decline in Dropouts

Note: 2004-2005 is baseline year. Mean = Mean decrease from baseline year.
In six years, we prevented 43 dropouts. At an $800,000 savings to society per dropout – a savings of Over $34 million!
Over six years, United Way has contributed $300,000 to this project.
For every $1 United Way has contributed, society will reap a $1.15 return on investment (ROI).
Additional Positive Outcomes
Teen Pregnancies

Three-Year Moving Average

Note: 2004-2007 & 2005-2008 are our baseline years.
Percent of students responding "Yes" (grades 6, 8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers ask me to work on special classroom assignments</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher knows when I am doing a good job and tells me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher provides opportunities to work one-on-one</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher praises me for doing good work</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher praises me for doing good work</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Antisocial Behaviors
(Percentage of students-Grades 6,8,10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>UCSD</th>
<th>County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attacking someone with intent</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being drunk or high at school</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling drugs</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing a weapon to school</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Antisocial Behaviors
(Percentage of students-Grades 6,8,10)

- Being arrested:
  - UCSD: 1%
  - County: 4%
- Getting suspended:
  - UCSD: 5%
  - County: 13%
- Attempting to steal a vehicle:
  - UCSD: 1%
  - County: 2%
Protective Factors

(UCASD - higher scores are positive; 50 = national average)
Take Home Message

Our mantra remains:

Every Youth Matters
One Youth at a Time
Future

- We are excited and hopeful to maintain the initiative and effects. We are currently working with United Way of Erie County to develop a strategy to fund these projects far into the future.

- We are working on expanding our initiative to other communities. Our overall research design is the delayed treatment cohort design. We are currently in the early stages of working with two additional local high schools, one rural and one inner-city, with other communities on the horizon.

- The past three years we have expanded into the Middle and Elementary Schools. Thus, pun intended, we are truly engaged in primary prevention. Time will tell ...
Healthy Youth Development

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Policy Implications

Based upon our unique perspective, the following policy changes would help us to continue making school a positive, nurturing environment that encourages student success.

1. Increase mandatory school attendance age.
2. Link social services that benefit family (welfare, food stamps, disability Social Security, etc.) to student attendance/success at school.
3. Resources for intense intervention with families that have had generations of school dropouts and students otherwise disengaged from school (truancy, etc.).