North Central Association

NCA

Arizona State Committee

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SENIOR HIGH ACCOMMODATION PROGRAM

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GENERAL APPRAISAL

The Senior High Accommodation Program should be commended for providing a unique program to a population of adolescents who are underserved in the educational community. The Senior High Accommodation Program has stated goals and objectives which are consistent with the philosophy of Secondary Alternative Education. This program is serving a unique student population of various ethnic, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds in a unique, nontraditional manner.

The present physical facilities are new and just recently occupied; however, equipment for specialized areas will need to be provided as materials and funds are available through the district and alternative resources.

The present faculty consists of two teachers who show evidence that they are enthusiastic and committed to the program and the thirty-eight students who are served.

Because of the unique nature of this population, traditional teaching/learning methods are obviously not appropriate. The team recognized the unique needs of this population and willingness and commitment of the staff to meet these needs. Nevertheless, it is the feeling of the team that outcome measures and/or accountability on the part of both staff and students can be incorporated in a creative, nonthreatening manner which will only serve to increase the students' personal growth, self-esteem and ability to function and serve in society. The team is not advocating a structured record-keeping system, but rather creative formats to recognize student goals and progress toward these goals.

STRENGTHS

The Senior High Accommodation Program has many strengths aside from its flexible, nontraditional program format. Several outstanding strengths are listed below.

1. A major strength of the program is the positive relationship developed between the Accommodations family members (i.e. student to student, student to staff, staff to staff).

2. The faculty maintains contact with and utilizes a variety of community resources. This allows the student to also become familiar and able to use these community resources.

3. The faculty believe in and show evidence of enthusiasm and total commitment to the program and needs of the individual students. It is very obvious that the students are aware of the concern, care and follow-through they receive from the Accomodation's staff.

4. The personal contact provided by the Accomodations staff provides the student with immediate feedback regarding life skills information and personal crisis follow-up.

5. Students interviewed were positive about the faculty and program and were able to verbalize the personal growth encouraged by the program format.

6. Although no formal follow-up studies have been conducted, there is evidence that many students have graduated and have become self-sufficient members of society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to allow the maximum benefit from the nontraditional environment while also allowing the development of skills, personal commitment and community responsibility, the following recommendations have been made.

1. Evaluate the type and location of facilities.

   The facility is very nice and has much potential for an appropriate educational facility, yet staff and students both indicate that the new facility feels "strange" and sometimes "frightening". The facility does not reinforce the feeling of a "family". A recommendation may be to house the senior High Accommodation Program in a house or other facility away from the other alternative programs.

2. Pre- and post-evaluations measures

It may be important to provide a method of pre- and post-evaluation in order to establish very clear criteria for success and knowledge of progress.

3. Formalized follow-up procedures

It may be very interesting for the staff to conduct more formalized follow-up procedures using the resulting data as summative evaluation for the program which will lead to appropriate changes in policies and procedures. If the staff were to keep a record of former students who visit the program, asking them specific questions, it may be that the resulting answers would provide insightful information as to needed changes in the policies and /or procedures. This information from former students, on the other hand, may also make clear to the staff the actions that provided the students with the most support, clarification, or needed information in any particular situation.

4. Evening support group

Providing an evening support group may serve the additional needs of the students and their families. Examples of types of support groups or topics may be:

a. Parent training

b. Parent support group

c. AA meetings

d. Pre-natal care

e. Nutrition
f. Communication

g. Vocational training

h. Workshops/inservices conducted by community members

5. Cohesive mealtimes

Investigate the feasibility of using mealtimes to promote communication, problem solving and group cohesiveness.

6. Attendance guidelines

It may be effective to establish attendance guidelines and provide an attendance chart where students sign-in, sign-out, and state their purposes for leaving. This will enable students to be more accountable for their time, while allowing them to be visually aware of the choices they are

making concerning the amount of time they are absent and where they are spending their time. Providing a visual chart may also increase students' awareness and accountability regarding the consequences (i.e., losing credit) for nonattendance. For example, if a student knows that attendance for a total of X number of days is required to receive credit in a certain course and that number of days has already been missed, as shown by the visual chart, then the student will need to make a very clear decision about whether to miss one more day and lose credit for the course.

7. Statement of weekly goals

   Encourage each student to have a statement of their weekly goals. These goals may be academic, vocational, family or crisis oriented, etc. It may be beneficial to display these goals in a chart form, encouraging students to write down and discuss the outcome and follow-up of their goals.

8. Daily community meeting

   Conduct daily community meetings to discuss individual goals utilizing peer and staff feedback as well as discussing group goals, field trips, etc.

Utilizing both the attendance guidelines and individual goals with specified outcomes and follow-up procedures will not only provide accountability for the staff and students, but will also provide a more operational, observable criteria for success which may be comforting as well as reassuring to many students. Many of these students need to become more cognitively aware of the outcomes of their goals, the consequences of their actions, as well as the criteria for success, possible alternative actions and follow-up possibilities. A visual chart specifying some of the above may prove beneficial for both accountability purposes, as well as increasing student self-esteem and progress toward personal and/or educational goals.

In conclusion, in order to encourage increased problem-solving and possible program improvement such as those stated above, additional staff for the Senior High Accommodation Program would prove beneficial.

REMEMBER: Problem-solving and creativity!