The Role of Adult Advocates in Dropout Prevention

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Youth Need Adults Who Care

Research on factors promoting resilience in youth at risk has shown that the consistent presence of a single caring adult can have a significant positive impact on a young person’s growth and development.
What We will Cover

• Who should serve as adult advocates
• What personal characteristics should the adult advocate possess?
• How schools might use adult advocates?
• What types of daily responsibilities adult advocates might expect to undertake?
• What does research tells us about assigning adult advocates?
What the Research Tells Us

• Adult advocates played a key role in fostering school engagement by:
  - providing students with opportunities to develop a sense of belonging at school
  - providing accountability for academic or behavioral progress
Who should serve as adult advocates?

• School based personnel
  – resource teacher,
  – community member,
  – social worker, case managers
  – Community advocates

• Others
  – teachers
  – university graduate students
  – school psychologists, guidance counselors
What personal characteristics are needed?

- Be Persistent, committed, and caring
- Believe in the ability of all students to succeed
- Willing to work cooperatively with families and school staff
- Be able to advocate, communicate, negotiate, compromise
- Be able to confront and resolve conflict
How schools might use adult advocates?

• As case managers who interacts with the student daily,

• To offer guidance on matters inside and outside of school

• To model positive behavior and decision-making skills,

• To be an encouraging and trusted person in the student’s life.

• To help address obstacles that prevent students from progressing in school
What types of daily responsibilities might adult advocates undertake?

• Meeting with youth at designated times
• Talking to teachers to gather and share information about student progress
• Contacting parents by phone or by making home visits to share information and develop a plan to re-engage students in school
• Talking with students about their academic progress and what assistance they think is needed
Assigning Adult Advocates

• Provide training
• Purposefully match students with advocates
• Keep caseloads low
• Select adults who are committed to investing in the students’ personal and academic success
• Communicate potential obstacles
• Provide advocates whom the students feel they can identify with including advocates who reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the students they are mentoring
Programs That Work

In each intervention, students participating in treatment groups that included intensive meetings with an adult advocate assigned to the student showed promising improvement in outcomes related to dropout prevention.
Check & Connect

• An adult monitor who works intensively with students to provide academic support, conflict resolution skills, and recreational and community service exploration.

Results: Students earned more credits toward high school completion than students in the control group and were less likely to have dropped out of school at the end of the first follow up year.
Achievement for Latinos Academic Success

• Adult advocates worked intensively with high-risk and disabled Latino students. The adult-student relationship rested on four key principles: accountability for student progress, accepting students “as they are,” attending to the complex needs of students at risk of dropping out, and offering flexibility and individualization to the student.

• The aim of the intervention was to build a trusting relationship in which felt a sense of belonging and identification with another adult and ultimately with the school.

• **Results:** The study found that students who participated in the treatment group earned more credits toward graduation, demonstrated reduced absenteeism, and improved their grades relative to those in the control group.
Mentors

• Mentoring is a structured, one-on-one relationship between a young person and an adult
• A relationship meant to help the young person grow in a variety of ways.

• Quality mentoring programs provide carefully screened and trained adults that spend time with a child, usually an hour a week over the course of a year.
Moms & Dad
Stay involved both inside and outside of school

• Encourage learning and school participation
• Be a part of your child’s school life by:
  – setting ground rules for your child at the beginning of the academic year;
  – knowing the school policies for homework; discipline and attendance
• Help your child get organized; provide an environment at home that encourages learning
Moms & Dad
Stay involved both inside and outside of school

• Provide both unconditional love and appropriate limits
• Talk often about what is most important to him or her
• Hold your child to high, but realistic, standards
• Show that you value education
• Provide opportunities for your teenager to succeed;
• Monitor your child’s friendships;
• Work with your child to become more aware of the media and how to use the media appropriately;
• Model good behavior; Be alert to major problems;
• Hang in there when times are tough.
Cultivating family involvement

Strategies:

• Phone network or chain of volunteer families to call each other
• Short survey to determine events and activities families want
• Invite families to visit, and create a comfortable environment
• Suggestion box for families to communicate anonymously
• Opportunities for youth involvement in all school activities
• Open school gym, pools, classrooms for after-school events
Cultivating family involvement

Strategies:

• Written policies that overtly respect diversity
• Information for families on policies, goals, reforms
• Training available for families on policy, reform, related issues
• Accessible and understandable decision-making and problem-solving processes
• Students and families on governance and other programs and committees
Activity
Directions: Work in small groups- For each potential roadblock, identify potential solutions that may work in your school

- School schedules don’t allow time to meet with advocates.

- It’s hard to find staff interested in participating.

- There is resistance from staff who think guidance counselors already serve this function.

- The students are resistant.

- Teachers and guidance counselors as adult advocates

- Assigned student may already have a caring adult at school (coach, band director)
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