

Reaching Mathematics Expectations (Grades 6 – 12)

Getting To Graduation (Drop-Out Reduction)

3. Secondary Transition Programs

\$130,000

These programs support student transitions from elementary to middle school, and middle to high school. Renton School District research based on the graduating class of 2006-07, identified the transition from 5th to 6th grade and from 8th to 9th grade as years where student drop-out rate was 25%.

Further analysis identified students needing to be engaged in their new environment, supported in social, emotional and academic changes. Specific risk-factors have been identified from the research (patterns of absences, failure in coursework, behavior/suspension patterns) that is being used to prevent drop-out behavior. An Early Warning System has been developed and staff is being trained district-wide, in the implementation, including interventions for students demonstrating signs of the identified risk factors.

To highlight the quality of this program, in November, 2009, The Seattle Foundation granted the Renton School District over one million dollars to fund three positions, for five years - for a team to monitor student risk factors in Renton's middle schools using our program. 100 students have been identified and are presently receiving support socially, emotionally and academically.

A highly successful district-wide "first day of school" program was developed exclusively for all 6th graders and all 9th graders. "Opening Day" activities for students included introduction to upper class mentors, orientation assembly, school tour, student schedule distribution, mini class sessions, locker assignment, practicing lunch and hallway procedures, review of student handbook, introduction of behavior expectations, and team building activities. This all made their first experience very positive and built confidence for the rest of the year. As a result of these activities incoming students were provided with an understanding of their new school in an environment that promoted safety, trust, and encouraged developing relationships with staff, upper classmen, and members of the grade level. Students, parents and staff agreed that this was an effective and valuable way to begin the middle school and high school experience.

Outreach to parents and students, prior to the transition and during the year has been implemented. This includes invitations throughout the 5th grade year for students and families at the feeder elementary schools to attend family activities at the middle school in order to demystify the upcoming transition. Middle school students involved in a variety of activities (such as music/band/athletics or clubs) are invited to attend similar activities at the high school level providing a connection and encouragement to continued participation during the freshman year. In addition, traditional parent and student orientations are held in the spring and summer.

The "Ignite" program has been adopted by the district following the determination of its research-proven results in other districts across the country. This program is designed to decrease the 9th grade failure rate, strengthen school climate, and increase student accountability by providing leadership training aimed at developing mentoring, tutoring, and support skills for upper classman (seniors and juniors working with freshman) and other school spirit type efforts to include and welcome all students into a new environment. Ignite programs for middle school students are being investigated with the hope of providing similar opportunities at that level.

Ongoing needed intervention for struggling students throughout the 6th and 9th grade transition year is also identified. This has been implemented in all Renton School District's middle and high schools in 2009, positively impacting over 3,600 students.

Funding for these programs was provided by a grant which has been eliminated by the state for 2010.

**4. Academic Youth Development Summer Program;
Mathematics/Leadership**

\$174,000

The goal of the Academic Youth Development Initiative is to improve student performance in high school mathematics. It is a summer "bridge program" with academic-year follow-up support. The program builds academic confidence and mathematical skills for freshmen going into Algebra I by creating student allies who can help generate positive classroom cultures for teaching and learning. Additionally, this program supports students needing additional confidence in their leadership potential.

More than ever, the skills needed for college admission and a growing number of careers require achievement in higher levels of mathematics. Algebra I often serves as a gatekeeper, determining whether students will be able to access high levels of mathematics and numerous career tracks. Renton implemented this program in 2008-09 including 26 students who experienced excellent results. These students have ended their first semester, all with passing grades!

This demonstrates the potential for students from every middle school preparing for high schools and this would be replicated district-wide, impacting 75 students.

5. Credit Retrieval Support

\$100,000

The goal for credit retrieval is to provide students with partial scholarships, thus reducing the individual cost of online coursework. Additionally, teacher support is necessary to help insure that the student successfully earns credit in order to increase the on time graduation rate.

High school students who fail to earn required credit for graduation must retake that course outside of the school day/year. Research indicates that students who fail behind in credit acquisition are more likely to graduate late or not graduate at all. Without funding support, most students are unable to afford the tuition fee. Previous experience has shown that teacher support is necessary to maintain student understanding and engagement.

Grant funding previously used to fund this support ends in June, 2010.

6. Before and After School Academic Support for Struggling Students \$100,000

Research supports that students disengage with school when they struggle to understand the curriculum. As a result students fail to develop academic skills required to successfully earn credit and progress toward graduation. This is a need the district is presently unable to fund.

With this funding, each secondary school would provide individual or small group support outside the school day for students struggling with understanding course work. This support is delivered as homework help or tutorials based on student need.