



Leveraging Resources to Support Academic Achievement

Youth Council: South Bay Youth Council

Element: Academic Excellence

Function: Coordinating Youth Services, Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Educational Options, Innovative Programs

The Challenge: Two features of the South Bay Youth Council contribute to the direction of their work and their approach to challenges. First, the Council's mission involves serving all youth. In order to achieve their mission, the Youth Council has chosen to seek non-WIA as well as WIA funding. Second, every superintendent of schools in the South Bay region sits on the Youth Council, bringing a strong emphasis on education.

Within this context, the Council was facing major challenges. Federal funding was declining while at the same time more students were falling behind in their math and literacy skill levels, creating an increased need for educational support services. The disparity between students' Grade Point Average (GPA) and their scores on the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) was increasing. For instance, some high school students had a GPA of 3.0, yet they tested at below 5th grade level in reading and math. Another problem was that more students were dropping out of school, which was leading to increased needs for WIA-funded social services.

The Practice and Evidence: Using several non-WIA funding sources in addition to WIA funding, the Youth Council has been able to develop and sustain a multifaceted afterschool tutoring program for all high school students. The program, called High Achievers, addresses basic skills problems, weaving together the goals and criteria of several major community and youth support funding sources and initiatives. High Achievers is operated within the broader Fit for Gold Program.

Funding for the program comes from many non-WIA sources as well as WIA. Currently, in addition to WIA funds, Department of Corrections (DOC) Title Five Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Program funding helps to support the tutor program. A Juvenile Justice block grant is combined with the DOC monies, so they can provide tutoring at all their campuses. Additional funding is supplied by CalWorks, and this money is channeled through Los Angeles County afterschool funding. The availability of afterschool funding led the Youth Council in part to design High Achievers to be an afterschool program. Two other major sources are SAFE Learning Communities and Schools for the 21st Century Learning Community.

The Youth Council, in cooperation with the superintendents of schools, has used the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) grade level tests for math and reading scores to measure

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outcomes. Approximately 87 percent of the participating youth improved their scores by at least one grade level in math or literacy on the TABE.

The Details: The development of the tutoring program started about the time WIA replaced the Job Preparation Training Act. The Workforce Investment Board and the Youth Council engaged 98 business and community leaders and members, and they gathered strategic data around skill requirements. Business people presented why they could not hire youth right out of school or why it was difficult to do so. As a result, the Youth Council saw that students had to perform at a certain grade level. These meetings supplied the impetus for the Fit for Gold program.

Cyd Spikes of the South Bay WIB reports that participation by education, service providers, and business leaders has been vital to the successful development of the High Achievers program. “It really has helped us having all of our superintendents [involved],” said Spikes. The second group that drives the Youth Council consists of representatives from the partner Youth Council agencies. “Each Youth Council member assigns a program manager to attend a partners meeting without staff so that we can really deal with implementation issues. It keeps them from having to work so hard,” notes Spikes. In addition, in 2001, a number of workgroups started outside of the Youth Council and reported to the Council for a couple of years. (They also had a good amount of student input in the first three years.) Council members engaged business people through this subcommittee structure because they found business leaders to be very issue driven. “If there’s an issue they can help solve, we recruit business leaders for these efforts rather than invite them to participate in regular meetings,” says Spikes.

Another practice they have adopted is holding the quarterly community meetings at times other than in the morning to match parent and youth needs.

Cyd Spikes attributes strong student success in High Achievers to several elements of the program. First, since High Achievers is operated within the Fit for Gold Program, they have many opportunities to recruit youth. “Any youth that’s involved in anything we do we try to steer them to it for extra credit and extra help,” reports Spikes. This placement of High Achievers helps draw a larger number of students into tutoring. Second, the basic skills instruction and homework are embedded in life skills workshops, employment training, and career activities rather than taught in isolation. Math skills, for instance, are incorporated into financial literacy topics. Reading skills might be included in lessons on decision making or conflict resolution. Third, the tutors are slightly older youth who not only provide instruction and support, but also serve as role models and mentors. High Achievers hires UCLA students to be the tutors, paying them \$8.75 per hour. Most of the time, the tutors meet students on the high school campuses, but periodically they take the youth on field trips to the UCLA campus for various college-awareness outings. Fourth, the program is available to all of the region’s high school students. It’s not limited to WIA-eligible youth. The tutoring centers are located at three of the four comprehensive high schools, one public library, and a community center at a park. Finally, the program incentivizes everything. Students have to complete a minimum of 45 hours; in

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exchange, they receive five academic credits. In addition, the program offers performance-based incentives: \$25 to \$200 based on points they earn.

Breakthrough Moment: For everyone involved with High Achievers, the quarterly report on the improved reading and math skills was a breakthrough moment. The report not only showed them that the program was working, but it also gave them a way to demonstrate to funders that their resources were being well used.

What's Next for this YCidea? The South Bay Youth Council will continue to support the High Achievers Program, using its documented successes when applying for continued funding.

Where to Go for More Information

South Bay Youth Council

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