

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Slideshow

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Small Group Academic Support Through Humanities Teams

Sleepy Hollow High School, New York • February 2009

Topic: Dropout Prevention

Practice: Adult Supports

### Highlights

- Before students enter ninth grade at Sleepy Hollow High School, middle school teachers have identified students who may experience academic difficulties in high school.
- The Humanities Team at Sleepy Hollow works with struggling ninth or tenth graders to give them the support they need to be successful in school.
- One of the Humanities Team's primary goals is to build trust with students.

### About the Site

Sleepy Hollow High School

Sleepy Hollow, NY

### Demographics

51% Hispanic

37% White

9% Black

2% Asian

24% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

28% English Language Learners

Sleepy Hollow High School serves an ethnically and economically diverse student population. The school operates a broad range of programs to support students:

- Young Parents Achieve programs serves pregnant and parenting teens
- Play It Smart to ensure athletes stay focused on their academics
- Bridge classes for non-native English speakers to help them master essential content
- After-school homework support centers available to all students
- Ninth and tenth grade Humanities Team to help students make a successful academic transition to high school
- Positive behavior approach

## Full Transcript

Presentation Title: Small Group Academic Support Through Humanities Teams

Sleepy Hollow High School

Sleepy Hollow, NY

Title Slide: Academic supports offer students opportunities to improve learning and to reengage with school. There are many strategies schools can use during the transition from middle school to high school. This slideshow presents examples of targeted interventions in key academic areas through individual and small-group instruction.

Slide 1: Selection for the Program

Text: Providing academic support helps improve academic performance and engages students in their schoolwork. Before students enter ninth grade at Sleepy Hollow High School, middle school teachers identify those students who may experience academic difficulties in high school. When they enter Sleepy Hollow, the identified students then receive academic support in ninth and tenth grades through the Humanities Team.

Audio: Students here at Sleepy Hollow High School are selected for the Humanities Program based on their performance in middle school, either academically or if there are behavioral or emotional problems that would come into the mix as well.

## Slide 2: Program Description

**Text:** The Humanities Team consists of an English teacher, a Global History teacher, a counselor, and an assistant teacher. This team works together with the small group of ninth and tenth graders to give them the additional boost they will need to be successful in high school.

**Audio:** The Humanities Program covers the same curriculum as regular high school classes. However, the classes are smaller and there is more differentiated instruction to assist the students in achieving success.

## Slide 3: Advantages of Small

**Text:** The classes in the Humanities program are smaller than the average class at Sleepy Hollow High School. This allows the teachers to give individual attention to the students.

**Audio:** There are several advantages of working with smaller classes. One of those is that personalization is much easier for us. We meet the students regularly, one-on-one and in small groups, to get to know them personally, what their lives are like outside of the classroom. If there are any issues that are happening with them that threaten to interrupt their learning, we try to deal with that and help them work it through so that they can be more successful in the classroom, as well as outside of the classroom.

The advantages of working with a small group of students is unbelievable. We are able to accomplish so much more; we're able to identify what our students need. What's also great is that we see our students for two years. So, it's not like you have to find out what a student's weakness or what his strengths are. We know it—by the time he gets to be a sophomore; we know how to approach that student. We know what to do with them. The small groups plus having the TA is just unbelievable, especially when it comes to writing. You can actually work with your students one-on-one while they are writing. I just love it. We get to do so much more.

## Slide 4: Team Work

**Text:** The teachers and counselor work as a team to resolve problems and help individual students in and out of the classroom.

**Audio:** We regularly identify students with problems. We work as a team: myself, Mrs. Wiener, Mr. Kelly, and the assistant principal. We meet weekly. We share with each other what problems we have identified, and we then discuss ways to deal with it. For example, if a student is having a difficult time at home, we would meet with the student either one-on-one or as a group and try to identify ways to make it better, to help them work through whatever it is that's bothering them. If they have academic problems, if they're struggling in the classroom, we are available to them throughout the day, as well as after school. The students come often for a review either during their lunch or after school, and we have found that's been

very effective. Just that little extra one-on-one or small group instruction in addition to what's done in the classroom appears to really help them improve in the classroom.

We discuss the problems, or the successes, of our students, and we evaluate them every week, and this keeps us on top of what's happening to them. So, it's not like, you know, you wake up six months later and say, "What happened to the student?" Every week we are on top of it.

#### Slide 5: A Unique Program

**Text:** The teachers on the Humanities Team use games and other instructional strategies to make classes relevant to the students and to keep them engaged.

**Audio:** The program is different from other classes in that we use unique ways of getting the information imparted to the students. For example, we use a Jeopardy game in order to teach literature. We use a vocabulary game to teach the vocabulary for the literature, and we work very hard to relate the content to the students' lives.

Mrs. Stempel and myself try to make the classes fun and exciting. And we're both—we're happy people. We smile a lot and have a good time, and I think that's contagious. I think the kids like that. They like to see their teachers enjoying what they do. Mrs. Stempel and I are both very positive, and I think that what we do is we make a very pleasant learning experience for our students. And when you have kids that feel comfortable and happy where they are, teaching is easy.

#### Slide 6: Counseling Component

**Text:** Mike Kelly, the Humanities Team counselor, works with the teachers to help build a strong network of support for the students. The counselor meets with students individually to help them through struggles with school, family, and other things that might affect their schoolwork.

**Audio:** In addition to highly competent and caring teachers, the program's counseling component seeks to address all the issues that interfere or encourage success. Those may be social, interpersonal, family issues. I will meet with students individually to talk about what's going on outside of school, as well as what their struggles are in school. In some cases, I may end up having a lot of discussion and spend counseling time with students to discuss their struggle with individual teachers, with peers, as well as with things that maybe going on at home with parents, step-parents, boyfriends, girlfriends, etc.

#### Slide 7: Importance of Building Relationships

**Text:** Building trust with their students is one of the Humanities Team's main goals. The trust the students

have in the teachers and counselors help them be successful in many aspects of their lives.

Audio: I can't overemphasize the importance of building a long-term, positive relationship with the students. You know, when students come to trust me I can do so much more to help move them towards their goals. One of the ways that I'm very fortunate is that by working with the students across all four years of high school, we get to spend a lot of time together over time, and we share, in a sense, we share the experience of them growing up from being relatively very immature eighth graders and ninth graders to becoming adults who are struggling with questions of, "How do I pay for college? Do I leave home? Do I stay home? Do I join the military?" And the trust building really comes, I think, from listening to them over a long period of time and having them come to believe that their success—as they define success—is really our goal in this program, not to try and push whatever the school's measure of success might be, but really to work with them to help them figure out for themselves what success means to them and encourage them to work towards that success.