

DOINGWHATWORKS



PRESENTATION

4:44 min



Preparing Students for Success Through the Freshman Academy

Del Valle High School, Texas

April 2011

Topic DROPOUT PREVENTION

Practice LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Highlights

- » The Freshman Academy is a school within a school, designed to provide support for ninth-grade students during the critical transition to high school.
- » Pathways to Success is a mandatory class for freshmen that focuses on the skills necessary for academic success.
- » All incoming freshmen are placed into one of four teams. Teachers and administrators on each team closely monitor student progress through weekly meetings.
- » Any student performing below a passing grade within a three-week performance monitoring cycle is required to complete two hours of in-school tutoring for each class impacted.

About the Site Del Valle High School
Del Valle, TX

Demographics:

- » 73% Hispanic
- » 17% Black
- » 9% White

- » 1% Asian
- » 7% English Language Learners

(Texas Education Agency Campus Profile, 2009-10)

Del Valle High School has developed a comprehensive set of policies and supports to prevent students from dropping out of school:

- » A Freshman Academy helps ninth graders transition to high school in an environment that meets their academic and developmental needs
- » Staff use middle school data on incoming students to identify those at risk of dropping out and guide course placement
- » Regular review of student data allows teachers to track student progress and provide additional supports as needed
- » Standardized course performance expectations encourage academic rigor in every classroom and support teachers through such structures as teaming, professional learning communities, and co-teaching

Full Transcript



Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Preparing Students for Success Through the Freshman Academy.



Slide 2: The Freshman Academy

My name is Tammy Underwood. I am an academic assistant principal at Del Valle High School in Del Valle, Texas.

The Freshman Academy is a school within a school. It was developed basically to implement a system where we could capture the attention of freshmen because we found out that the transition for freshmen from middle school is a very critical year. Research has shown us that if a student can graduate in four years with what we call their cohort,

they are more successful outside of their high school, outside of graduation.

So it's become very important to us in the Freshman Academy to really capture those students, allow them an engaging opportunity for education so that they can graduate in their four years. And one of the things that's so important is to help them maintain passing grades. So in 2007 our failure rate was at 43%. After four years of the Freshman Academy, it's down to 26%.



Slide 3: A sense of belonging

The Freshman Academy creates a sense of belonging for our students because we were able to get a whole new building, starting last year, and the building creates an environment for our students where they can come and feel safe. As they grow and as they mature, we see that they start to move a little bit away from the actual Freshman Academy into the main building. But because the buildings are attached, the students are able to move back and forth freely.

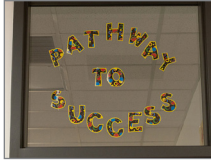
I think if you don't have the space for a separate building, you want to really think about setting aside some kind of demographic space within your building. So let's use a specific hall just for our freshmen where we can locate those freshman classrooms so that our freshmen know when they are traveling to and from classes during their hall pass time, they are traveling with other freshmen.



Slide 4: Teaming

Teaming is a structure that we use in the Freshman Academy. We have all of our students and teachers divided into four teams. So each team has an English teacher, a science teacher, a math teacher, a social studies teacher. It also has two Pathways to Success teachers. It has a counselor and an administrator. We look at every student individually when we put them on a team, and so that's 700 students we look at as incoming freshmen. So in April and May, we sit down and we project onto a board the students, what kind of classes they are going to be

taking—for example, a pre-AP student will be in some pre-AP classes—and then we take all of that into consideration, and we place them on team 1, 2, 3 or 4.



Slide 5: Pathways to Success

Pathways to Success is a program specifically to the Freshman Academy. We call it *PTS*. *PTS* is a mandatory elective. A student who is in a tier 1 class will have the same curriculum as a student who is in a tier 2 class in *PTS*. But the tier 1 classes are larger; they are about 25 students. A tier 2 class might have eight to ten students. So those tier 2 classes are geared more toward the student who needs a little bit more extra motivation. Twice a week, the students are able to have tutors in the classroom or to go down to the tutoring lab. And I think that's been one of the most effective programs that we have.



Slide 6: PTS teachers

The Pathways to Success teachers serve as a liaison between student and the core teachers to be sure that the student is fully aware of what grades they are making, what assignments they are missing, what assessments they need to make up. I think that that communication is really the key difference that makes our students successful because the students know that their teachers care about what their grades look like, that the teachers care about what their attendance looks like, and there is a sense of commitment to the student so that the student is persuaded to continue with their educational process.

I think the success of the Pathways to Success program is really seen in how many more students were graduating, how many more students are walking the stage now than before the *PTS* program was in place.



Slide 7: Learn more

To learn more about preparing students for success, please explore the additional resources of the Doing What Works website.