The Valued Youth Partnership is a research-based, internationally-recognized dropout prevention program that has kept 98 percent of its tutors in school. In the program, secondary students who are considered at-risk of dropping out of school are placed as tutors of elementary students, enabling them to make a difference in the younger students’ lives.

Given this role of personal and academic responsibility, the Valued Youth tutors bolster their self-discipline and self-esteem. Schools shift to the philosophy and practices of valuing students considered at-risk. The program supports them with positive recognition and instruction.

Dropout Prevention and More

The goal of the Valued Youth Partnership program is to reduce dropout rates. Participating schools have also seen:

- Enhanced basic academic skills and life skills;
- Strengthened perceptions of self and school;
- Reduced disciplinary action referrals* and absenteeism; and
- Strengthened school-home-community partnerships.

*A recent multi-year analysis found that disciplinary referrals decreased by 14% among participating students.

Research-Based Design

The Valued Youth Partnership is a research-based program, as required by the No Child Left Behind Act. The program was extensively researched in 1989 using a longitudinal, quasi-experimental design with data collected for the treatment and comparison group students before tutoring began, during implementation, and at the end of the first and second program years. A full description of the research base is online at www.idra.org.

“The Valued Youth program has made me a better student because interaction with children has helped me be more caring and understanding. Knowing that my tutees are expecting me to be there, I enjoy going every day… I understand now that we can all improve a student’s outlook on school by taking time a few minutes a day to help out.”

– High school tutor
All children are valuable…

I have to work hard to keep my grades up so I can keep tutoring and set a good example for my young students.

– Middle school tutor

Program Elements

The program has five instructional strategies.

**Tutoring Sessions** – Tutors tutor a minimum of four hours a week for one class period a day.

**Classes for Tutors** – Tutors meet with their secondary school teacher coordinator once a week.

**Educational Field Trips** – Tutors go on at least two to three trips to explore career, economic and cultural opportunities.

**Mentors and Role-Models** – Adults who are considered successful in their fields and who represent students’ ethnic background are invited to participate.

**Student Recognition** – Students are acknowledged for the efforts and contributions they make as tutors.

And it has five support strategies:

**Curriculum** – The objectives of the curricular framework are improving the students’ self-concept, tutoring skills, and literary skills.

**Coordination** – Periodic meetings are held to coordinate all activities, facilitate communication among personnel and provide first-hand information for monitoring the program.

**Staff Enrichment** – Training and technical assistance is provided to implementation team administrators and teachers.

**Parent Involvement** – The program demonstrates to families that the school takes their children’s education seriously and values the families’ contributions.

**Evaluation** – IDRA analyzes data and other information for each school to inform implementation of the program.

The program has been approved by the Texas State Board of Education as an innovative course eligible for elective credit at the high school level.

Rigorous Evaluation

The Valued Youth Partnership’s ongoing evaluation provides information throughout the program, allowing for adjustments to ensure a quality program implementation. The program utilizes a pre- and post-test evaluation that includes quantitative and qualitative measures to gauge student progress. Students are evaluated by classroom teachers at the elementary and secondary campuses. Evaluation data are collected on a secure web site.

Funding Options

School districts use the following funding sources to implement the Valued Youth Partnership in their schools:

- Federal funds, such as Title I-Part A (Basic Program), Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged, Title II and Title III;
- State compensatory and migrant funds;
- Other federal and state funding directed at dropout prevention;
- Funds identified through school-business partnerships with businesses and local civic groups.

The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership program was named a Hispanic Ed Bright Spot by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

– September 2015
None is expendable

Creating Success
The program has been successful everywhere it has been in keeping Valued Youth students in school, in the classroom and learning. Since its inception in 1984, the program has kept 33,200 students in school, young people who were previously considered at risk of dropping out.

Role of IDRA
IDRA provides the following to preserve the integrity of the program and ensure that students succeed.

✓ General program orientation for administrators and counselors
✓ General program orientation for elementary, secondary core teachers, parents and students
✓ Site observations of tutors working with tutees
✓ Teacher coordinator participation in annual national program institute
✓ Implementation team meetings on site
  • First Meeting – beginning of program
  • Second Meeting – halfway through program
  • Third Meeting – end of program year
✓ Three training and technical assistance sessions for faculty working with tutors, including core area teachers, teacher coordinator, administrators and counselors

What Successful Teachers Can Do to Prepare At-risk Students for College?
Develop teachers’ efficacy in working with at-risk students
• How to articulate students’ high expectations

College readiness strategies for students deemed at-risk
• Strengthening and integrating study skills into the curriculum
• Competencies students need in order to excel in school and in college

Developing students’ self-efficacy as a prerequisite to school success
• Modeling and peer collaboration
• Capitalizing on student assets
• Building effective teaching and learning strategies
• Developing cognitive and non-cognitive skills

✓ Providing caring support to build confidence, creativity and excitement

Other to be determined in consultation with school district.

✓ Materials
  • Teacher Curriculum Guide (i)
  • Tutor Workbooks (i per tutor)
  • Tutee Kit & Tutor Kit (i master)

✓ Program Evaluation Report
  • Online evaluation review and training for collection of data
  • Student case studies
  • Analysis and interpretation of data
  • Report and presentations to school district administrative team and school board

✓ Additional Activities
  • Assistance with planning and coordinating student leadership days
  • Videoconferencing with network schools (nationally and internationally)
  • Assistance with planning and participation in recognition events (end of year, tutor of the month, field trips, etc.)

Role of Participating Schools
In broadest terms, the role of the schools in the Valued Youth Partnership includes:
• Supporting the program at the district level;
• Accepting the program’s philosophy as consistent with the school’s mission;
• Setting goals for the school in terms of keeping at-risk students in school and helping them succeed;
• Resolving to meet these goals through planning and action;
• Committing time, effort and other resources to implementing the program’s critical elements;
• Collecting evaluation information to assess program implementation and program success; and
• Valuing all youth.

“I refuse to miss school because I do not want to disappoint my students.”
– Middle school tutor
The Valued Youth Partnership was featured as an “American Graduate Champion” by PBS.

– KLRN-SA October 3, 2015

Let the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership touch the lives of students, parents and educators in your district.

To get started, contact IDRA at 210-444-1710 or contact@idra.org.

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The only thing that kept my feet firmly planted on the ground was the knowledge that I was here for someone else, and they were depending on me… These children were my light.

– High school tutor

What We Have Learned

Anchored in the program’s many years of experience, Continuities: Lessons for the Future of Education, captures seven key lessons for improving the quality of education for all students.

1. Valuing Youth Works. If you provide young people with an opportunity to contribute – to themselves, their families, their communities – they will.

2. Local Ownership is Key. To scale up and replicate success requires holding fast to essentials while adapting to local contexts.

3. School Leadership Sets the Tone. To squarely take on attrition, school leaders must inspire innovation, embody engagement, and incorporate actionable knowledge.

4. Realizing the Power of One + One + One. All students must have at least one caring adult in their lives at school and a reason to care.

5. Family and Community Engagement is Essential. The school-family-community triad is at the heart of holding on to students and ensuring their success.

6. Success Demands Well-Defined Partnerships. When roles are clear and each partner contributes from its unique strengths, a multi-sector collaboration can reap dramatic results.

7. Structure and Innovation Sustains Impact. Transformative impact demands sustained structures, resources and a commitment to valuing all youth.

Visit IDRA’s website to read the Continuities publication, get other information, see videos about the program and read essays by students on how the program impacted their lives.

“ When school started, I felt a big emptiness inside me. I felt that if I missed a day of class no one would notice. Now that I started in the Valued Youth program, I have a better self-esteem. Through the VYP, three kids have made a change in my life… I know that I am making a big difference in their lives.

– Middle school tutor