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from the office of Superintendent Robert Collins



Deirdre Oakley discusses Romeo and Juliet with her 9th grade Success Academy English class

“Just In Time” Monte Vista Programs Change Student Lives

There's an old saying that *you can tell the heart and soul of an organization by how they take care of those who are less fortunate.* Monte Vista has put into place a set of models for intervention that effectively address students “at risk.” *Intervention that is “just in time.”*



Gary Schwartzwald, Principal at Monte Vista and Learning Center teachers Tracy Leota and Marc Barlow

While each of our high schools provides an excellent academic program, preparing students daily for colleges and careers, we also know that we have students who are not finding success. The reasons for student failure or dropping out are as many as we have students in those situations. Each is an individual story and requires an individual answer. During the past months we have looked at Chaparral Continuation High School and our community day school program, Gateway East and West. Additionally, there are other programs such as Phoenix Independent Study. However, even with all of these alternative school models, we are still in need of additional programs to address the numbers of students “at-risk.” Here is how Monte Vista High School is addressing those students.

9th Grade Success Academy at Monte Vista

Deirdre Oakley walked around the classroom relating Romeo and Juliet to the lives of her 9th grade English students. The connection between her and the students was obvious – **they were engaged.** Ms. Oakley is part of the Success Academy (SA) at Monte Vista High School along with Marc Barlow, Molly Welsh, Summer Havins and Carol Schnaubelt.

The Academy addresses the needs of those students who are entering 9th graders, but were unsuccessful in the 8th grade, failing three or more classes. In this program, a core group of teachers trained to address the unique needs of these students, provides both advisory and personalized instruction. Support personnel are also assigned to assist the teachers in addressing the many social needs of the students. Students feel connected to the teachers and there is strong parent “buy-in.”

The results are compelling. Student GPA's for the Success Academy (SA) are 2.08 while a control group of similar students is 1.24. The D/F rate for SA is 31% and for the control group 65%. And periods truant for SA students is 50 and for the control group 390. What separates the SA from the control group? Parent buy-in.

Research tells us that 9th grade Academy models and teachers working together as instructional teams improves student achievement. We also have other examples of 9th grade models at **El Cajon Valley, Santana and Mount Miguel.** Developing these models for 9th graders will be a conference topic in the coming months.

The Learning Center

Just how do you begin to solve the problems of students who have only 60 or 90 credits, but are in their third year of high school? It's a question that every school has to be able to answer. Monte Vista has taken a bold step in answering that question with the development of an on-campus Learning Center. The Learning Center addresses those students who are 11th graders with between 60-90 credits. Without specially designed intervention programs, these students will drop out of school. The Learning Center provides two hours of daily instruction, five days a week, with students being programmed into Independent Study the remainder of the instructional week. This also provides students with opportunities to work or enroll in ROP programs.

But models don't work without people, and Monte Vista has two very unique and dedicated teachers in Marc Barlow and Tracy Leota. **Each has a passion for and dedication to, those students** who have been unsuccessful in a traditional school model. Mr. Barlow handles the Math/Science component and Ms. Leota teaches History/English.

In the coming weeks, we will be working with staff to discuss and begin to develop Learning Center models in each school. To build the program we will need to invest in technology and software and work towards a year-round continuous enrollment type of model. The development will be a school-by-school effort, taking into account the uniqueness of each school and its student body. The Learning Center model is a huge step towards addressing our drop-out rate and students “at-risk.”