2016 Youth in Community Summit

A student drops out of school every 24 seconds. According to research: students who drop out of school are more than twice as likely than high school graduates to slip into poverty in a single year and three times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed (*Silent Epidemic, 2004*).

Wayne County High School found a way to hear from their students while teaching them skills and giving them an opportunity to re-teach those skills to other students who might be struggling to reach personal and academic goals.

The annual Youth in Community Summit gives students the opportunities for meaningful conversations with school faculty, community members, and family members about what impacts their success in school. These conversations assist students as they develop a vision for their future so they develop skills needed to reach their goals.

The Wayne County High School C.A.F.E. (Circle of Adults Focusing on Education) is working to eliminate high school dropout by engaging family and community members in initiatives to encourage all students to graduate. Students who are not typical leaders and who need additional supports to be successful are the students who need to address the barriers they are facing at school and in their community.

Each year 10-15 students, some with learning disabilities, discipline concerns and others off-track for graduating, work with high school student council members to lead 5 individual learning sessions. The session topics are selected through our C.A.F.E. and with the help of student leaders who have concerns about their future. A few of the topics have included: goal setting, future and financial planning, bullying prevention, decision making, handling yourself in an interview, and solving problems. While working through these topics students have learned specific skills like: conflict resolution, proper communication skills, working well with others, importance of work ethics, and how to manage time and money.

Students who have participated in the summit have had the opportunity to meet community leaders, find out more about their career choices, participate in service learning projects, and learn about each other through individual and group activities and simulations. Each year the summit offers a variety of platforms to gain the interest of students who need additional supports to reach success.

Our first summit was set to accommodate 100 high school students and has grown to now reach 200, 9th through 12th grade, students who are invited by their teachers and peers to participate.

The summit has been held at Coastal Pines Technical College each year and last for 4 hours on a Friday morning in the spring. When students arrive they receive their event Tshirt and are equally divided into five rooms where they will be given directions and start their first session. Every 40 minutes students rotate to their next session until they have experienced all five workshops. During the last session of the day students complete an exit survey which provides us feedback and topics of concern to address in the future.

Students have shared some valuable feedback about the summit:

“I found the future planning activity helpful as it showed me a different way to look at my goals”.

“Decision making is a helpful skill to learn because I sometimes let my words/emotions get the best of me”.

“When I did the gift identification activity it made me realize who I am”.

Parents have shared these things about their students who have participated as leaders:

“I see more confidence in him for himself”

“He has been more respectful and not as confrontational”.

“He has a will to fight for what is right and maintain a great grade point average. He finally learned how to respect himself”.

“My child is more focused on his future”.

Our students need to have a voice and a role in creating the path to their success. The Youth in Community Summit is an avenue for students to learn skills and be a part of the necessary conversations that will impact their future.

We are Wayne County and our Destination is Graduation and Beyond…