

FY16 Best Practice Summary Graduation

Parent Mentors are successful in engaging families as they support their student to reach their graduation and post-secondary goals. Parent Mentors are encouraging families to be better informed and engaged in the process of transition and skill building in order to assist their child to meet IEP, academic, and personal goals that lead to their greatest level of success.

Evidence Statements: *Parent involvement has a positive impact on post-secondary outcomes for individuals with disabilities.*

Source: *CEC's DCDT Fast Facts* *When families stay engaged in a young person's education, social and community activities, the young person is more likely to complete high school, participate in post-secondary education and is more likely to be employed.* **Source:** *NCWD – Youth* *When teachers reach out to parents, students make more progress in both reading and math, researchers studying schools in low-income neighborhoods found student performance improved 40 to 50 percent faster if teachers did these three things: 1. Met face-to-face with each family at the beginning of the year to build relationships 2. Sent families materials each week on ways to help their children at home 3. Telephoned parents routinely with news about how their children were doing, not just if there were problems.* **Source:** *PTA Standards*

Objective: Increase the high school graduation rate, decrease the dropout rate, and/or increase post-secondary enrollment in partnership with families

Vital Behaviors:

1. Family and student will participate in person centered planning and complete task regularly that are related to their plan and goals
2. Family and student will use provided exercises to practice at home regularly, reporting efforts using preferred communication method
3. Family and student will review behavior strategies to guide conversations/activities, regularly reporting progress
4. Family and student will utilize the results of a transition checklist to complete work-readiness exercises, regularly reporting efforts
5. Family and student will use a graduation timeline as a guide to track individual activities student needs to complete
6. Family and student will track ongoing conversations by using conversation starters or progress reports to discuss attendance/behavior/academic needs of the student

20 Parent Mentors engaged families in order to increase the high school graduation rate, decrease the dropout rate, and/or increase post-secondary enrollment in FY16.

144 Families and their partners were targeted in initiatives related to improving graduation outcomes in FY16.

80% of Parent Mentors met their end of the year goal related to improving graduation outcomes in FY16.

Parent Mentors are successful in supporting their target groups through:

- Email, phone and one-on-one contacts
- Home visits
- Walk-Through demonstrations
- Informational workshops on graduation requirements and transition planning
- Partnerships with other school and system meetings where all families are asked to attend

Parent Mentors are successful in partnering with stakeholders seeking to improve graduation outcomes:

- Special Education Director and staff
- Guidance counselor
- Parent Involvement Coordinator
- CTI and CTAE Coordinator
- Technology specialist
- Project Search

- Community Internship Program and other volunteer opportunities
- Transition Specialist
- Vocational Rehabilitation Coordinator
- Chamber of Commerce

Parent Mentors encourage partnerships by supporting teachers and school staff:

- Train and support families
- Gain materials and tools to share with families and students
- Begin and maintain two-way communication plans with families

Parent Mentors promoting improved graduation outcomes reported these challenges and solutions:

- Families struggling to complete the vital behaviors responded positively to the training they received from families successful in completing vital behaviors
- Families experiencing success in completing the vital behaviors reviewed strategies and techniques with families who were not able to attend the trainings
- Splitting college and career material to explore between class time and home allows student to engage with both partners while meeting their academic, IEP, and transition goals

Parent Mentors observed the following while supporting families seeking improved graduation outcomes:

- Improved academic, behavior, and attendance
- Improved communication between teachers and families
- Improved student confidence and higher expectations
- Improved study skill habits
- Increased number of students with an established vision for their future
- Students meeting and reporting achievement of goals
- Increased number of students employed due to involvement in skill building initiatives (ex: Project Search)
- Improved personal and professional skills
- Families are more informed and connected to what their student is completing at school and what must be completed to graduate
- Students completing college and career related applications (ex: FASFA process completed)

It is the recommendation of Parent Mentors who have focused on improving graduation outcomes that you:

- Start early in the year building relationships with families, school personnel, and community members
- Seek buy-in of essential partners to work with you and the families that need support
- Offer online training opportunities as an option for families unable to attend trainings
- Set clear expectation so that families you are working with understand the commitment involved in learning a new skill and accomplishing goals that you will support them in accomplishing
- Utilize families and students who have experienced success as partners in working with other families
- Person centered planning and other future planning tools help keep student on track with their goals
- Project search requires family engagement and seeks improved student outcomes therefore it is aligned with the work Parent Mentors are prepared to support
- Utilize bound activity books or toolkits for families so that shared work does not get lost and students have a place to refer when they are planning and creating new goals
- Establish a training series to provide ongoing support and conversations related to graduation and transition planning.