Alternative Learning Center

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Proposal for the Alternative Learning Center

**Background**

During the 1994-1995 school years a number of 8th grade students were identified as at-risk. These students were not meeting the goals of the educational programs established by Hempstead School District. They were low academic achievers, experiencing great frustrations in the traditional /conventional school environment. For the most part, these students were socially promoted, without exhibiting the academic, social or emotional maturity necessary to become successful in the 9th grade the next year. In response to the need for more intense support for our at-risk students, the administrators in the district presented a special program for the 1995-1996 school years called Wordpower. Wordpower is designed to teach the academic courses to the at-risk 9th graders I a more flexible classroom environment in order to provide success-oriented academic experiences as well as implicitly helping our students attain the necessary social skills required to become success citizens in the future.

Thus far, Wordpower has proven to be a positive force for our identified at-risk students. The Wordpower team has been working diligently to provide success-oriented activities so that theses 9th graders can catch up and be well on their way to graduating on time. However, there is a small minority of students who will destroy the program as a whole as a result of their academic, social and emotional frustrations. There are about 40 students who have been identified with serious learning deficiencies, who are chronically absent from school illegally, who cause serious disruptions in class without regard for het well-being of classmates or teachers, who fight I the general school population causing safelight concerns in the school , who set fires I that hallways, who graffiti’s and vandalize the school buildings, who are continually disrespectful and downright abusive to the administrative staff and/or who have experienced learned helplessness to such a point that they see no opportunities for success in school. IN other words, these students cannot function in the Wordpower program and are continuouolsly frustrating students and staff who are putting formth a alienate effort to help the Wordpower kids adapts and adjust to the high school learning environment.

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Obviously, not to care for these students who cannot function in the Wordpower program is unacceptable. This district has offered alternatives to students in need of special program. To data, there are available the GED program, CARE program, etc so that our students will become successful citizens. The Alternative Leaning Center is designed to provide yet another safety net for these students who are failing out of school. We offer a nontraditional, self-contained academic classroom environment with success oriented learning activities so that our students may acquire the necessary social to become productive citizens. This program is a school within a school. It provides services, as well as social services that will empower our students to succeed.

**ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER COMPONENTS**

The Alternative Learning center will comprise two classes of 20 students in each. These classes will be self-contained, and the teachers will be required to teach in the designated areas so that the students will not be forced to move around the building. Math, science, English, lunch, social studies XL Math, communications arts and physical education will be offered. A monitor will be at the site to provide support for the students as the need arises. In addition, there will be support seminars f room the team center, crisis intervention center, counselors, Hands across Hempstead, psychologists, and social workers. A full period will be devoted to these services so that the at-risk students will be able to express concerns, individually or as a group. IN this way, appropriate “life skill” will be3 taught in a thorough manner and in ways our students will comprehend. In addition, there will be a parent council, composed of concerned parents, to monitor and support the program as they see fit. Moreover, field trips, guest speakers, group dynamics, self-esteem building seminars, and vocational opportunity activities will be included in the program.

Finally, a Dean of the Alternative Learning Center will be necessary to ensure that the program will function smoothly. The Dean will be the cement that holds the various individual components together. The Dean will be required to monitor the students’ progress in all academic areas, schedule seminars for life skills classes, collaborate with the parent council, schedule field trips and special events, and act as a liaison between the Alternative Learning Center and the administrators at Hempstead High School.

**Screening criteria**

There are many criteria that will be utilized in order to identify students who are eligible for the Alternative Learning Center program. First, test scores that indicate deficiencies in mathematics and reading will be scrutinized. Also recommendations from classroom teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers and administrators will be uses to assess eligibility. In addition, attendance profiles and discipline interventions referrals will be looked over to identify students who would benefit from this program.

**Resources Required for the Alternative Learning Center**

This program is attractive because little is needed financially, and the personnel required to meet the goals of the program can be met with internal changes. While a Dean is necessary for the program, Mr. Omero Catan is available to accept the responsibilities of the Deans position without cost; he requires the experience for his administrative internship from St John’s University. No addition resource needed is a two-fifths social studies position to allow Mr. Catan the opportunity to coalesce and monitor the various components in a viable and properly functioning program.