

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Missing Melinda!
- 3 Office Discipline Referrals
- 7 Uninterrupted Scholars Act
- 8 Upcoming Events
- 8 SPDG: Successful Graduates

Visit us at:

<http://sss.usf.edu>

Dr. George Batsche
Project Director

batsche@usf.edu

Heather Diamond

Project Coordinator

hdiamond@usf.edu

Thomas Garrett

Program Analyst

tgarrett@usf.edu

Anne Glass

Medicaid Consultant

aglass@usf.edu

Alexis Idlette

Program Analyst

idlettea@usf.edu

Curtis Jenkins

School Counseling

ctjenkins@usf.edu

Dr. Jayna Jenkins

MTSS Consultant

jayna@usf.edu

Dr. Trevis Killen

School Social Work

treviskillen@usf.edu

Helen Lancashire

School Counseling

hlancash@usf.edu

Dr. Dianne Mennitt

School Nursing

dmennitt@usf.edu

Dr. David Wheeler

School Psychology

wheeler@usf.edu

325 W. GAINES STREET
SUITE 644
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301
TEL: (850) 245-7851



Connections and Integrations: Building Community with Stakeholders!



From left to right: Dr. Denise Barrett, K12 Director of Standards Implementation; Dr. Monica Verra-Tirado, Chief, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS); Sam Foerster, Deputy Chancellor of Student Achievement and School Improvement, Bureau of School Improvement (BSI); Chane Eplin, Chief, Bureau of Student Achievement through Language Acquisition (SALA); Michael McAuley, Regional Executive Director, BSI; Dr. Steve Neely, Chief, Bureau of Standards Implementation and Support (BSIS). (Not pictured: Phil Cantor, Chief Postsecondary Assessment).

“Summer School” for Florida Department of Education (FDOE) Staff

In early June, FDOE leaders gathered in St. Petersburg to build community and collaborative relationships with each other and with the regional field staff of the BSI.

Hosted by Deputy Chancellor Sam Foerster, regional staff attended several breakout sessions led by bureau chiefs and learned about cross-bureau collaborative visions and efforts to support district and school staff to improve student outcomes.

Several Discretionary Project leaders (from PS/RtI, PBS, FDLRS, FIN, SEDNET, and Project 10) also shared their way of work to support district and school staff. Ann Selland, MTSS Specialist for Region 1, reflected on the statewide community-building sessions, “It was so refreshing to finally come to the realization as a state that we are all working toward a common goal: student achievement. We will now have a common vision and common terminology so our schools can see us as a team, not as separate entities with separate priorities.”

Following these sessions, regional staff engaged in problem-solving to explore ways to reduce barriers that lie in the way of leveraging statewide partners, as well as their own teams, to support district staff with strategic goal setting and implementation of key practices associated with improved student outcomes.

Missing Melinda!

Our wonderful friend and Student Support Services colleague of 11 years is not actually missing, but we are already anticipating missing her even while wanting to help her celebrate her fast approaching retirement this August. If you have ever called our office in the past 11 years, you have most likely heard Melinda's kind voice and experienced her patient assistance. Before joining our project, she served Flagler County for 10 years in Medicaid billing.

I know that she is always kind and patient because I have the pleasure of having an office right next to her. Not only is she knowledgeable from years of experience at both the district and state level, she manages to keep up with everyone's special events and accomplishments. In return, we want to acknowledge the value she has brought to student services in Florida.

Thank you, Melinda Moon, for every kindness, every helping hand, and every knowledgeable perspective you have offered to your teammates, parents, students, and our partners in schools and districts over your years of service.

Your blood runs orange.

Your blood runs blue.

You love the Gators,

And we love you!



What Matters Most?

You are leaders. Like all leaders, you have an ever-flowing stream of priorities to manage. When it comes to professional self-reflection, we have the responsibility to know the skills and behaviors that maximize the impact of our efforts and to strive toward proficient use of those skills and behaviors in our daily work. Fortunately, research findings for effective leadership in education are clear and are reported with a certain level of consistency across sources. The Center on Educational Outcomes published a report in 2011 entitled, *Moving Your Numbers*, which contains a **Key Practices Guide** titled, *What Matters Most*. This source includes six key practices with specific indicators of effective leadership addressed at the state, district, family, and school levels that clearly illustrate the application of the six key practices:

1. Use Data Well
2. Focus Your Goals
3. Select and Implement Shared Instructional Practices
4. Implement Deeply
5. Monitor and Provide Feedback and Support
6. Inquire and Learn

Our team recently participated in an internal self-assessment process using the specific indicators within each of these key practices. This was an in-depth exercise for us that revealed our collective perspectives on our skills and behaviors. We converted the indicators into a survey with a rubric so that we could compile and analyze ratings. Our findings from this exercise are helping us to integrate our current strengths and weakness into our plans for the coming year. We will use the same self-assessment tool annually to measure our progress toward ideal application of these indicators.

We experienced such value in this self-assessment exercise that we are working on a similar self-assessment tool specifically addressing the district, school, and family engagement indicators. Our intent is to make this tool available for district leadership use. District leadership teams who engage in this type of self-assessment may benefit internally as we did, and the data may also be useful for communicating your priority areas of need with state leaders who seek to better serve and support your work.

For our profession's continual improvement we must use what we know from research, identify priority goals, analyze relevant data, design integrated action plans, implement plans with integrity, and evaluate our progress. The skills and behaviors included within each of the six key practices fit right into our commitments and represent "what matters most" in our leadership service.

Learn more about *Moving Your Numbers, What Matters Most: Key Practices* and access interactive tools and featured stories, including one from our own Brevard County Schools, at

<http://www.movingyournumbers.org/>.

Telfer, D.M. (2011). *Moving your numbers: Five districts share how they used assessment and accountability to increase performance for students with disabilities as part of district-wide improvement*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Intervention-Based Discipline at Milton High School

By Chad Rowell, Assistant Principal
Milton High School

In the summer of 2011 the Milton High School (MHS) Leadership team sought to lower the high rate of Office Discipline Referrals (ODR) discouraging the schools' efforts at student achievement. The team

believed that cutting discipline rates would have a direct impact on overall school success, and enable us to better serve our students. We knew that the plan would need to involve the following four reforms:

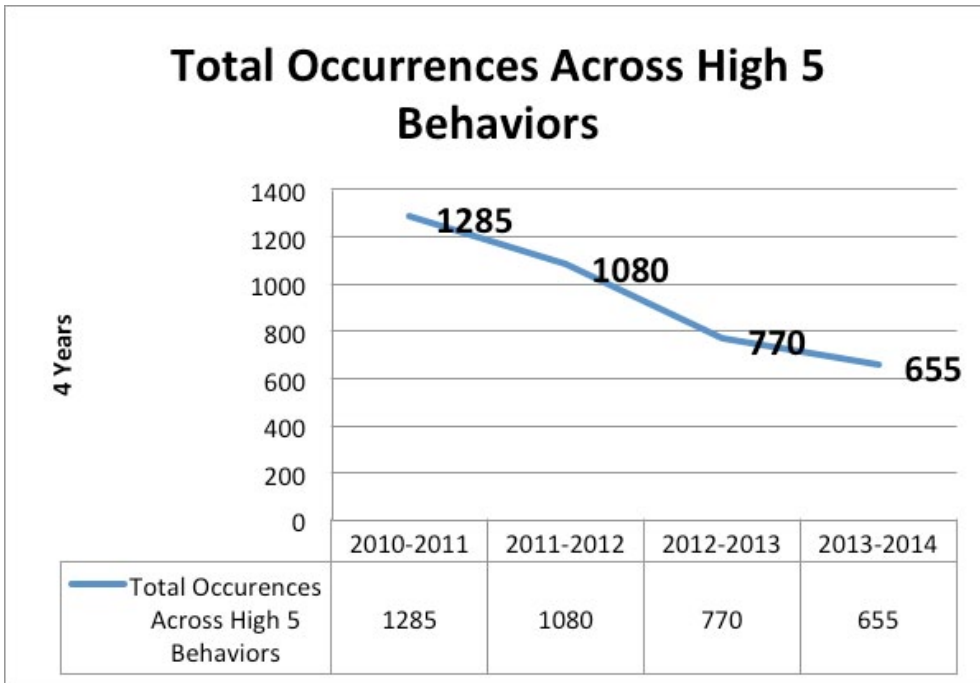
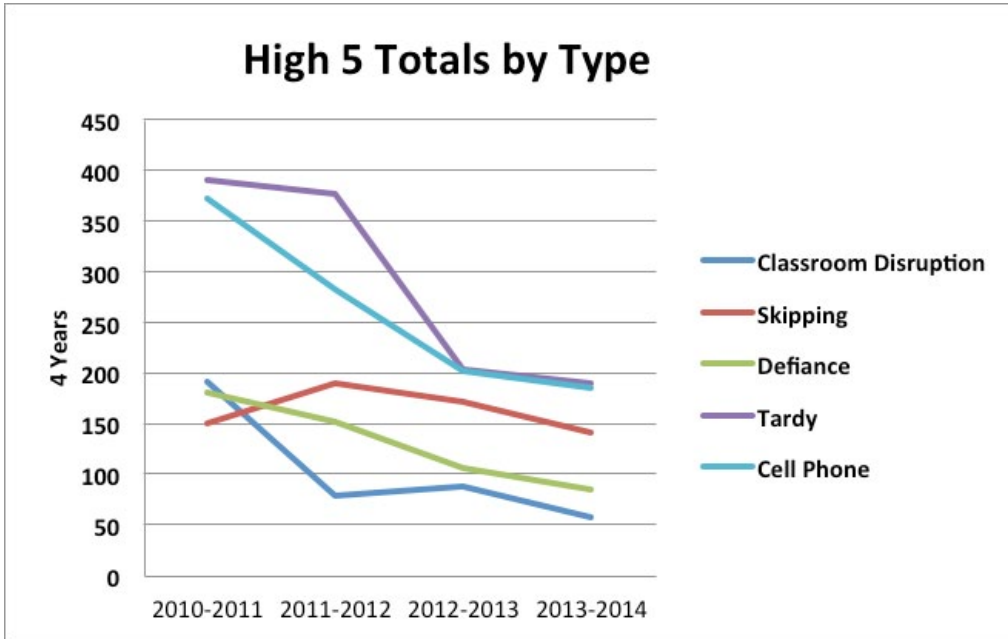
- ◆ Regular collection and review of school-wide data with high occurring behaviors and high ODR-prone groups.
- ◆ Establishment of a school-wide plan targeting the highest occurring behaviors and ODR-prone groups.
- ◆ Goal Setting and Regular Reporting to the Faculty regarding progress on the high occurring behaviors and ODR-prone groups.
- ◆ An intervention based approach to discipline through the basic RTI framework of increased intervention as ODR-related behaviors persist throughout the year.

In order to carry out these points the following initiatives were launched.

The High 5

MHS established a team of teachers (The High 5 Team) to study the highest occurring behaviors, set goals then develop strategies to help students curb behaviors in the identified areas. The High 5 Team reviewed all MHS discipline data from 2006–2011 and determined that five ODRs had made up roughly half of all referrals. These behaviors were coined "The High 5." The group realized that curbing these behaviors could have a large impact on overall ODR rates. They set a goal of 25 percent reduction for the first year for each High 5 behavior, the High 5 total, and the overall ODR rate. New goals were set each year.

The team developed a timeline of monthly reporting (later this became nine-week reporting) on progress towards goals. The team then developed professional development plans and campuswide teacher strategies to help curb the occurrence of these behaviors. The result of these efforts has been a dramatic drop off in ODRs related to these behaviors.

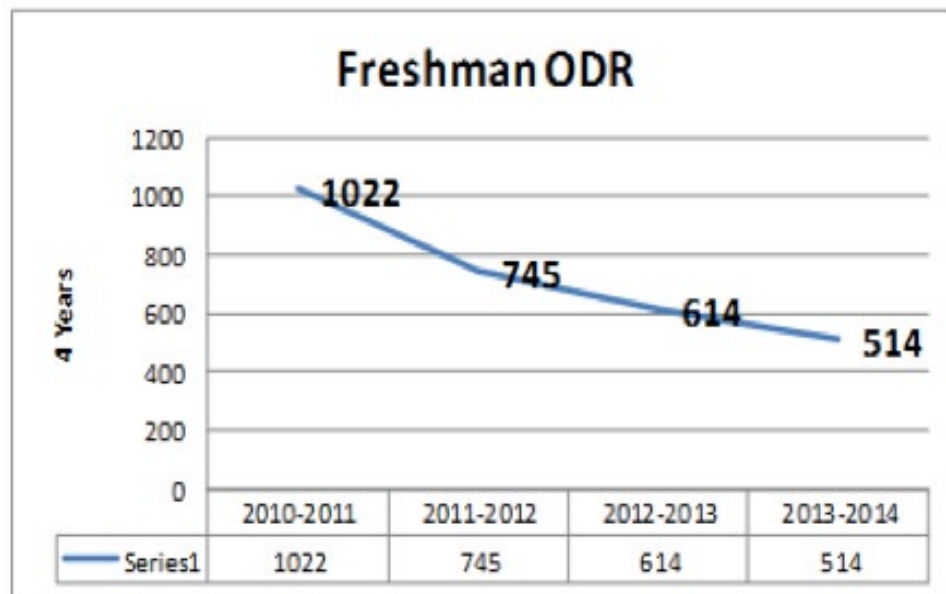


The Freshman Focus

The five-year data study also revealed that the most ODR-prone group on campus was Freshman. Likewise, a significant drop in the rate of ODRs amongst ninth graders would have a ripple effect upon the overall ODR rate. The team began by focusing upon transitioning eighth grade student data (discipline, truancy, and academic) of incoming freshman each year, determining which students might be prone to shortcomings regarding the meeting of behavioral expectations; namely the High 5.

Incoming freshman with high history indicators were brought in to meet with a member of the Leadership Team in the opening weeks of school. The behavioral expectations were clearly communicated and, when appropriate, intervention strategies were put in place to help start the year successfully. The parent was contacted and made aware of the effort. At each midterm, and nine-week mark, each student's progress was reviewed and a member of the Leadership Team met with them to discuss progress. Often individualized goals were set in these meetings and incentives established, based upon achievement of the goals. Parents often participated in these meetings via conference call.

The Freshman Block Party was instituted at each midterm and nine weeks' end for students who had met targeted behavior goals. Homeroom competitions were developed and winning classes received parties and prizes. As with the High 5 Initiative, a three year review indicates successful results tied to transitioning efforts with our ninth grade students.



The RTI Intervention Framework

Rather than focusing on “getting tough” and/or “stiffer punishments,” the Leadership Team realized that a new approach was needed. While punishments are necessary in order to reinforce consequences for behaviors leading to ODRs, “stiffening” or “get-tough” strategies that result in higher suspensions rates would do little to bring down the ODR rates. The team determined to couple appropriate consequences with appropriate interventions.

In processing ODRs and reviewing student records, we began expanding our focus from individual incidents to the contributing factors of a student's behavior. In talks with the student, parents, and teachers, the team asked questions, "Why does this behavior occur?" "What is the stimulus?" "Can we change the stimulus and achieve better outcomes?" "What strategies for intervention might be appropriate?"

These are not new questions, but the asking of them was not habitual throughout our discipline process. Through the RTI framework we **systemized** these questions and ensured follow up on the results through appropriate intervention. As ODRs persisted, we revisited the appropriateness of the intervention, along with the punishment.

Aligning Level of Support with ODRs–RTI Framework at MHS

Tier 3

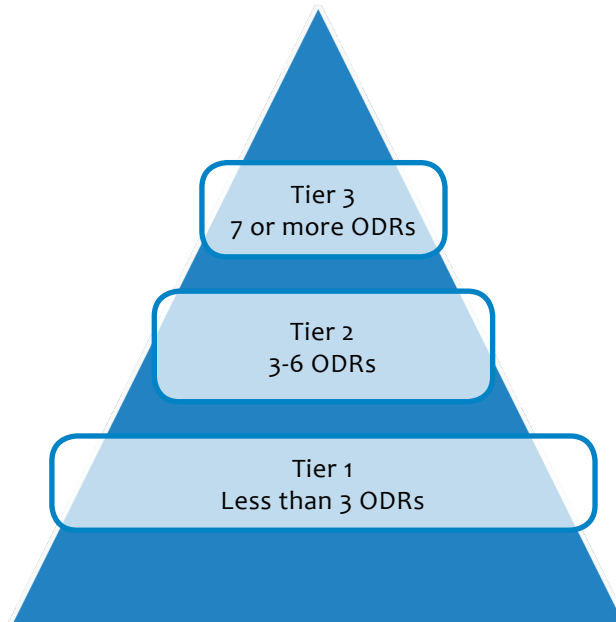
- ◆ Mandatory parent conference with Administrators–Strategies revisited.
- ◆ Behavior Contract is established making clear that alternative education plans should be sought if behaviors persist.

Tier 2

- ◆ Mandatory parent conference with Administrators, and teachers,
- ◆ Intervention plan with a specific strategy, and timetable for improvement.

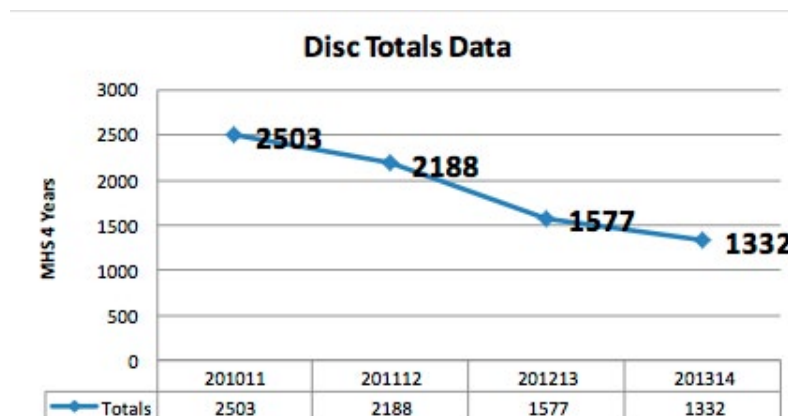
Tier 1

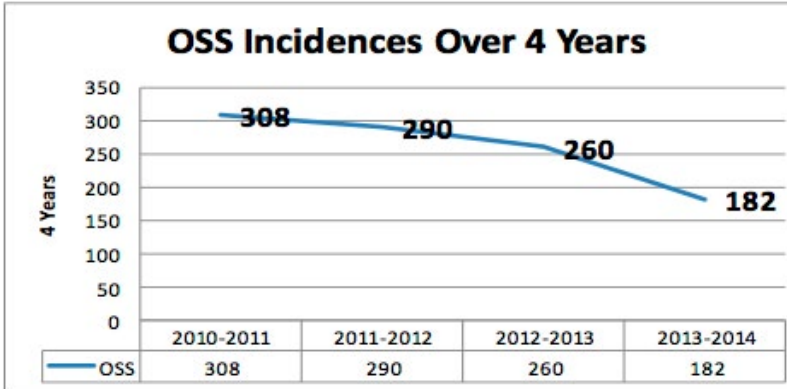
- ◆ All students receive instruction on discipline policy and procedures twice a year, as well as regular reminders and exposure to initiatives targeting specific behaviors throughout the year.



The Results

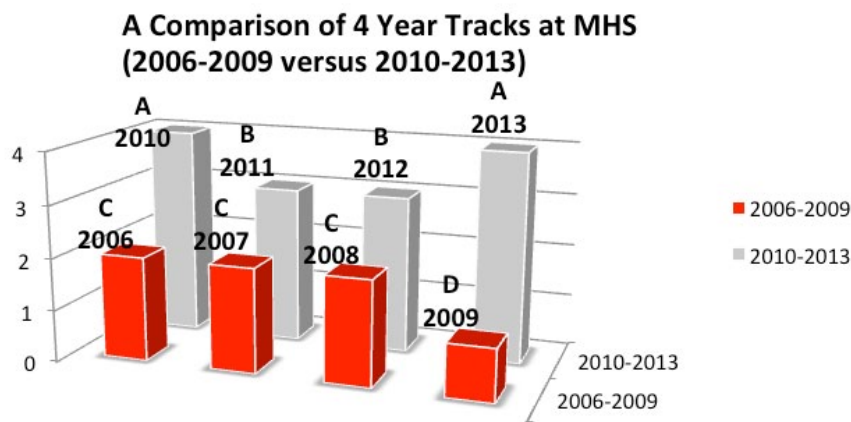
The result of the High 5, Freshman Focus, and RTI initiatives has been a dramatic reduction in our overall office discipline rates. These improvements are felt powerfully on our campus.





The discipline rate drop off has correlated with higher levels of student achievement, as MHS is consistently listed amongst the highest achieving schools in the Santa Rosa School District scoring an “A” school in two of the last four school years.

At MHS, we have learned that through utilizing data to determine student and school-wide behavior trends, focusing strategies and professional development upon deterring these behaviors, and most importantly a commitment to student intervention and relationship building (rather than out of school suspension), we can greatly reduce the office discipline referral rates and better serve our students.



Uninterrupted Scholars Act

The United States Department of Education has released new guidance for implementing the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA), which was signed into law by President Obama on January 14, 2014. The USA amends the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in the following ways. First, the USA permits educational institutions to disclose a student’s educational records to an authorized state child welfare or tribal representative without parental consent when the agency or organization is legally responsible for the care and protection of the student. Second, the USA allows educational agencies and institutions to disclose a student’s educational records to an authorized state child welfare or tribal representative following a judicial order without requiring additional notice to the parent. These amendments to FERPA are designed to increase the educational and developmental outcomes for students in foster care by providing information that can provide early identification and educational services. For questions and answers regarding the USA, please visit <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/uninterrupted-scholars-act-guidance.pdf>.

National Foster Care Month!

May was recognized as National Foster Care Month! In accordance, the Health and Human Services Department has added foster care resources to the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections website, <http://www.nrcpfc.org/is/education-and-child-welfare.html>. This comprehensive website provides relevant policy, practice, and advocacy advances related to educational support for students in foster care. The information that is contained on the website will enlighten and empower foster care parents, child welfare workers, teachers, and student services professionals to advocate for the educational well-being of students in foster care. For example, a social worker's practice guide to education for students in foster care, caregiver's guide on PreK-12 education, scholarships for students in foster care, and tips on what teachers can do to support students in foster care are included on the website.

Upcoming Events

The Child Protection Summit 2014

The Department of Children and Families is pleased to announce its annual Child Protection Summit. The Summit is the largest child welfare event in Florida and the Department anticipates over 2,400 child welfare professionals and related partners: attorneys, case managers, child advocates, child protective investigators and supervisors, Child Protection Team staff, child welfare trainers, court staff, DCF staff, foster and adoptive parents, guardians ad litem, judges, law enforcement and juvenile justice professionals, service providers, and youth. Registration is open, visit <http://www.cvent.com/events/child-protection-summit-2014/event-summary-2813f0d91ab7443bb99b80b268bf7c93.aspx?i=2fba48c0-5667-400a-b533-46759b0692b>.

Enhancing Diabetes Management...

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors hosted a webinar on Enhancing Diabetes Management in Schools: Policy, Protocol, and Collaboration. The webinar, slides, and resources can be found at <http://www.chronicdisease.org/?SHwebinars>. Handouts include the Diabetes Medical Management Plan, developed by the Polk County School District in collaboration with Dr. Henry Rodriguez, Clinical Director, University of South Florida Diabetes Center.

Florida's State Personnel Development Grant : Successful Graduates

By

Peg Sullivan, M.Ed., Director
msulliva@fgcu.edu

Cindy Medici, M.Ed., SIM™ Project Manager
MEDICIC@pcsb.org

Lael Engstrom, MSW, Check & Connect Project Manager
lengstrom@mail.usf.edu

Florida's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) is a five year project funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The grant was developed to respond to concerns about the graduation, proficiency, and dropout rates of students with disabilities. The projects funded by the SPDG seek to build capacity to increase school completion rates of secondary-aged students with disabilities (grades 6-12) through the provision of professional development to support and scale-up existing research-based instructional practices, develop capacity for use of evidence-based dropout prevention strategies, and enlist parental support of these practices.

Grant partners include

1. Florida Gulf Coast University—responsible for grant administration and oversight.
2. The Institute of Community Integration at the University of Minnesota (developers of the Check and Connect program)—responsible for provision of Check and Connect training and to support efforts to build state capacity.
3. Project 10: Transition Education Network at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg—home of the Check and Connect Project in Florida.
4. Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System Administration/ Human Resource Development Project—home of the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM™) Project in Florida.
5. Central Florida Parent Center, Family Network on Disabilities, Inc., and Parent to Parent of Miami—subcontracted to provide various forms of support for engaging family members with implementation efforts.

Activities include (a) providing supports to districts and schools in implementation of the Check and Connect, a research-proven model of sustained intervention for promoting student engagement with school and learning; (b) scaling-up an existing initiative related to the SIM™ to enable both rural and urban schools and districts to deepen their implementation of this evidence-based program; and (c) support to sustain the implementation of these practices by increasing the awareness and knowledge of parents. Additionally, as part of the other activities included in this proposal, the project is convening a work group to recommend changes to the certification requirements for teachers serving students with disabilities. Our first cohort of districts

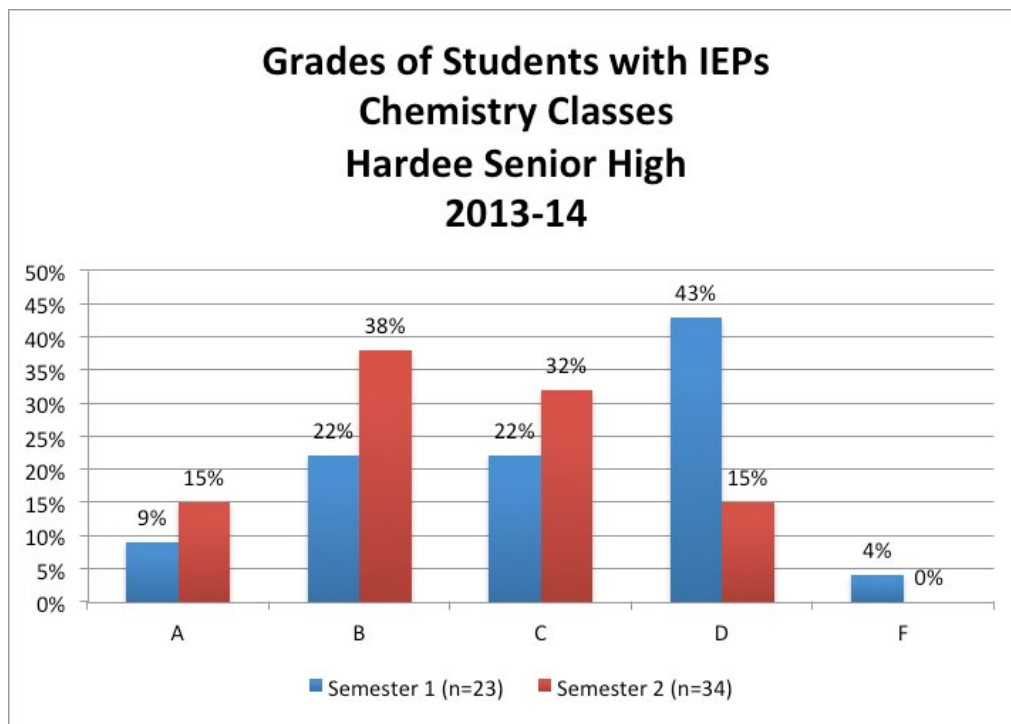
has allowed us the privilege of working in Baker, Hardee, Hendry, Levy, Madison, Pinellas, and Polk County schools. We have learned much from this work, and as the grant is entering the second year of implementation exciting student outcomes are beginning to be reported from implementation schools which we are eager to share.

SPDG SIM™ Project = Increasing the Proficiency Rates of Students with IEPs

SPDG SIM™ Project teachers are beginning to see the fruits of their hard work! Core Content Teachers in the project spent the year engaged in professional development and coaching that required them to analyze the standards, determine the knowledge, skills, and concepts that are most critical for all of their students to master, and then explicitly teach through Content Enhancement Routines (tier 1). Teachers providing more intensive instruction, determined what specific skills their students needed to improve in order to be more successful in their core classes, and then taught the appropriate Learning Strategies Curriculum (tier 2 or 3). Though it is too early to see the overall impact of their efforts, teachers have submitted students' pre- and post-test scores. The mean change was 17.5 points!



Additionally, the teams of Chemistry and Biology teachers at Hardee Senior High School, with the support of their science coach, collaboratively developed Unit Organizer Devices and used the Unit Organizer Routine and later the Question Exploration Routine in their classrooms. The improvement in grades for students with IEPs was amazing (only Chemistry grades are shown, as the Biology EOC scores had not been included in students' grades at the time of this writing).



SPDG – Check and Connect – Spreading like a virus!

Check and Connect implementation schools sent leadership team members to Preparation and Implementation training last spring and summer where they developed a comprehensive plan for initial implementation of the program personalized to their school. These teams then selected a Coordinator for their school, selected Mentors and identified the first group of students for the program (all students with IEPs). Mentors were trained last summer and throughout the school year were matched and began building relationships with their mentees. Critical components of Check and Connect (tier 2 or 3) include a weekly face-to-face meeting with the mentee, weekly checking of academic and behavior data, monitoring the person-environment fit, persistence-plus, and family engagement. As individual Mentors learn to implement with fidelity we are seeing improvements in attendance and academic performance as well as a decrease in behavior referrals. Labelle High School, Hendry County, has just reported that 11 of the 12 seniors targeted as unlikely to graduate have indeed graduated!

Some of the individual stories shared recently by the Check and Connect Mentors and Coordinators are below:

1. "I had a student who was a constant referral problem in middle school and even last year as a freshman, I developed a really strong bond with him (he wanted to basketball and football as soon as he got his GPA above a 2.0). He worked extremely hard and finished term 1 with a 3.4 GPA and is also on track to get an as good or even better GPA the second term. It never was a concern if he could do the work or not. He is an extremely bright kid, taking honors classes, but his behavior has always been a problem. I would like to report that he will be eligible to play ANY sport or activity he chooses next year as a junior and only had two referrals all year long!"
2. "One mentee has very weak social skills, and didn't even talk to his parents, but he began trusting his mentor. He rarely talked to her throughout the fall, but this spring started talking to his teachers and the mentor. When the mom called in one day, she said, 'What in the world has happened to my son? He's talking all the time, and telling us stuff that is happening, and has just done a 180.' The mentor said that the teachers were astounded as well; this was not the student they had known for the past year. Relationships do make a difference."
3. "This mentor helped his mentee set a goal to move to the ninth grade next year. This goal seemed unattainable, except to the mentor and mentee. What was amazing, is that this student came into the year as an extra year seventh grader but with the mentor's help and his own determination, he

was promoted into the eighth grade during the year, and now will be going into ninth grade—his proper grade level—next fall."

4. "My mentee missed at least two days of school every week last year and barely spoke to anyone. This year he is a senior and started his year with hardly enough credits to qualify as a junior. I asked to be assigned to him because I already had a good rapport with him. From day one, we focused on graduation and kept putting it in his mind as a possibility. After two months, the student had completed seven courses that he had previously failed through credit recovery. He became the school's student of the month in September, and he speaks up in class and participates in lessons. This spring, he vanished. His father disappeared from home and he had to go to work. He only lacked ½ credit to graduate. All of us were out looking for him, but his mentor felt he would come back in time to walk across the stage. The last day he could possibly make up his credit, he came to school. After four hours of work, he completed his course and was able to get his diploma. He graduated!"

We are excited with what's happening across Florida: All it takes are two people developing a relationship of irrational attachment and miracles happen.

We are currently in the midst of a very busy summer schedule of professional development as we are bringing on an additional eight districts (all implementing Check and Connect and two implementing SIM™) as well as adding schools in some of our existing districts. Feel free to contact any of us for further information.

