Student Retention Workshop May 2016

Student Retention = Student Success

Goal: explore issues related to student retention, discuss barriers, and share best practices and team approaches to supporting student success.

Students Retention IS about helping students become successful.

Outline:

- Defining the issues:
  1. Why do kids leave early?
     - Barriers to success: Factors contributing to early leavers
     - Factors that can be controlled; factors that can be influenced; factors that cannot be controlled
  2. Why do kids stay?
     - Factors that contribute to retention and success
  3. What the survey says:
     - Results of informal polling of SWAC students
     - Results from research

- Strategies for Success: Cases Studies
  4. Group activity:
     - Each group looks at one case study and considering the factors that can and cannot be controlled, what are some strategies that can be utilized.
     

And/or

- Participants are asked to share case situations with the whole group and group offers suggestions/strategies to address the issues.

- Summary/Conclusion
  - What supports are needed to ensure students success and retention?
Brainstorming Notes

Who do students leave early?

- Employment / $
- Mental health issues
- Housing issues
- Disinterest
- Transportation / time / distance
- Lack of supports
- Have kids
- Disengagement
- Pressures
- Team sports
- Potential to succeed – pushed into it
- Not what they thought it was / fit
- Connection to instructor
- Lack of clarity
- Course expectations

Why do students stay?

- Being in a new environment
- Inspirational faculty
- See the outcome
- Early success
- Pride
- Dual credit
- New/different opportunities
- Joint supports
- Feeling like someone cares
- Maturity
- Someone who believes in them
- Someone who shows them the pathways
- Setting not as overwhelming
- New chance / 2nd chance
- Meaningful rules
- Networking
- Resume
- Extra certifications
- Uniforms
- Ability to fast track
- Program pathways
Case Study: Stephanie, age 18

Stephanie was not successful in her 4th year at her home school. She was bullied and started skipping classes. Though she is a good student, she was not earning her credits. Her home life is difficult and for a period of time she was living with her boyfriend’s family. Her home school put her in the SAL program and she managed to earn a few credits. Stephanie came needing 9 credits to graduate. At the beginning of the semester her attendance and work ethic were great. She was able to recover some credits plus earn high grades in her other courses. She has been accepted to all five college programs to which she applied for September 2016. She was my poster child for this semester. Then all of a sudden around March break, Stephanie started to miss class. I text and called numerous times and eventually, even though she is 18+, I called her mother to reach out. Stephanie came in and we talked about her life issues. She is suffering depression and is helping raise a 14-year-old brother as Mom cannot do this alone. I thought we had worked out a schedule for her to attend but she has not followed through. She says that she is not bullied at school and enjoys our interaction. With the stresses of home life, she appears to be overwhelmed and struggles to get out of bed. She sends in work periodically but is at risk of not graduating.

Strategies:
Case Study: Karen, age 17

At the start of the program, Karen needed 11 credits to graduate. She would arrive to class at least 30-45 minutes late (daily) and often did not return to school after the lunch break. When in the classroom, she occupied her time on her phone and needed constant re-direction in order to accomplish any independent work. Her attendance had been an issue since she started her secondary education. Karen’s mother was notified weekly of her daughter’s status in the program and it was made very clear during such conversations that things had to change.

If the course work appealed to Karen, she was very engaged and could provide some excellent work. She lives with her mother who works full time and she has access to a vehicle (which allows her to leave whenever she feels the need). She will turn 18 years old in a month and the secondary school has indicated that she will not be able to return should she still need credits to graduate.

To date, Karen has completed 3 of the possible 4 dual credits that can be listed on her transcript.

Strategies:
Case Study Caleb, age 18

Caleb lives by himself. After boarding three different buses in order to get to SWAC, he spends a minimum of 45-50 minutes (one-way) on the bus. Having to achieve 8 credits, Caleb usually attends 4 days a week. However, he seldom ever actually accomplishes much when in the classroom. Between the long commute and having 25+ hours of part time work, he often is drowsy in class and struggles to stay focused on his school work. Caleb is quick tempered and can be highly confrontational when challenged by either his peers or the classroom teacher; even if the comment is just positive motivation. He is highly intelligent and has never had an IEP.

Strategies:
Case Study Amanda, age 20

Amanda is a grade 12 student with 24 credits. Amanda had been attending the adult education program in Brantford with mixed results. Her biggest obstacle to success was reported as attendance. When we booked her interview for the Dual-Credit program, she had to cancel due to her daycare provider not being able to take her three year old son on that particular day, as he was ill. Once enrolled, her attendance continued to be poor due to herself and her son being ill. Often her daycare provider would not take her son because of his having diarrhea or some other bug. Amanda complained that she often had to watch her roommate’s children as well, although the roommate (not in school or working) would not reciprocate when needed. On the days that she did attend the college classes she would sometimes need to leave to take calls from daycare or other groups such as Ontario Works, sometimes missing crucial material such as: An E.C.E. Child-Observation assignment. Just before mid-term Amanda left her shared apartment due to irreparable differences with the roommate. She looked for emergency housing within the city but was not able to find it. She ended up relocating to Simcoe (30 minutes from campus) making it impossible to attend school. At this point she continued to work on her high school classes as best she could, submitting some work by e-mail. By mid-term she was able to relocate to our city of Brantford finding a room at the Nova Vita women’s shelter with her son. She met with the college professor to try to recover the credit, however the professor explained that there was nothing that she could do given that she had missed half of the 45-hour course. Amanda’s defense in this case, as it has been on a regular basis was “I’m a single mom so this is really hard.”

Strategies:
Case Study: Scott, age 20

Scott needs three credits and his community service hours to graduate. Two years ago he was a victim of a train accident where he lost part of both his right arm and leg. He is angry and often gets himself into fights, he is currently on probation. At home he has the support of his mother, but feels responsible for his younger brothers' well-being. He often has to leave early to assist his brother…or to “take care of some stuff.” He has difficulty sleeping due to his injuries, as he cannot get comfortable. He loves to complete hard workouts at the YMCA for the Conestoga Dual-Credit in fitness but his limbs suffer. Scott is a proud Mohawk who has made some connections in the acting and film community on First Nations. Some of his connections are urging him to take summer-course in acting; there has also been some interest in making his story into a screenplay.

Strategies: