

Appendix C

Hierarchy of Interventions

The phrase *hierarchy of interventions* is the organizer DuFour, Eaker, Karhanek, and DuFour (2004) use in their must-have book *Whatever It Takes*. No others have, to our knowledge, implemented such a thorough and successful design for preventing student failure. Also called the *pyramid of interventions*, it is an escalating series of moves with low-performing or failing students that surrounds them with caring, support, and no-option structures that dramatically raise their chances for academic success. Below is a summary of the steps DuFour implemented at Adlai Stevenson High School.

1. Placement Test

A locally developed criterion-referenced eighth-grade test is used to identify proficiency that represents what graduating eighth graders are supposed to know and be able to do to be considered proficient in reading, writing, mathematics, and foreign languages. Results are used for ninth-grade placement in Honors, College Prep, and Modified Program. Students entering the Modified Program will receive accelerated, not remedial, instruction and be expected to take only college prep or honors courses from the beginning of 11th grade. The Modified Program ceases to exist as a level after 10th grade.

2. Counselor Watch

Each January high school counselors ask middle school principals to complete Counselor Watch Referral Sheets on any eighth grader with poor academic progress, personal or family problems, poor attendance, peer

relationship issues, low self-esteem, or chronic underachievement. In April the high school counselors visit every middle school to review with the principal, counselor, and social worker the referral sheets that have been written for every eighth grader. The meeting clarifies concerns of the middle school staff and identifies interventions and support the student will require upon entering high school.

3. Proactive Student Registration

Each February, high school counselors travel to the middle schools to meet with each individual eighth grader. Counselors use this opportunity to foster an expectation of participation and achievement at the high school. All students are asked to identify three goals they hope to achieve during their freshman year as well as three co-curricular activities they may want to do.

4. Summer Study Skills Course

Survival Skills for High School teaches how to take notes, annotate reading, use a planner to organize time and materials, read for comprehension, set goals, and communicate effectively. The course is taught by a high-performing teacher who has talent with and interest in working with students who have a history of achieving below their potential. The course lasts four hours each day for four weeks.

See pp. 53–54 of *Whatever It Takes* (DuFour et al., 2004) for how the high school staff makes this course popular with 80% of incoming freshmen and not associated with remediation.

5. Freshman Orientation Day

One day earlier than the formal beginning of school, all freshmen get tours of the building to find out how to find their way around by going to each class with their actual teachers on an abbreviated version of their own schedule.

6. Freshman Advisory Program

For 25 minutes four days each week, all freshmen are with a faculty advisor who creates an environment where students relax, get to know one another, and have their questions answered. There are 25 freshmen in each group. Because all students assigned to an advisor have the same counselor, the counselor attends Advisory period once a week.

7. Freshman Mentor Program

Assisting each faculty advisor are five upperclass mentors who meet with their 25 freshmen during Advisory period. The mentor's job is to do whatever is necessary to help his or her 5 students be successful at the high school. Within the first week of school, all freshmen are required to pass a

test on the school rulebook; mentors tutor them on the rules until each freshman is able to pass.

8. Co-curricular Activities

A co-curricular fair is scheduled (and a co-curricular handbook is developed and given to each freshman) to provide information on every program and answer any questions students or parents might have about the programs. Students who indicate interest in a program are sent a letter by the sponsor urging them to join.

When students meet with counselors during course registration in April the previous year, they also have the opportunity to register for co-curricular activities.

9. Progress Reports

All students receive a progress report at the midpoint of each 6-week grading period (that there is a six-week grading period instead of the traditional nine-week period is a change in itself). This means each student has a report on his or her learning every three weeks.

Steps 1–9 are implemented universally for all incoming eighth graders. Steps 10–15 are an escalating series of steps implemented with students as needed.

10. The Good Friend Program

The Counselor Watch process may result in a student being recommended for the Good Friend Program. Prior to the first day of school, counselors link a student with an individual teacher who pledges to take a special interest in the student.

11. Counselor Check-In Program

Students identified for this program are scheduled to meet with their counselors individually on a weekly basis for at least the first six weeks of school.

12. Early Expression of Concern—Quadruple Teaming

When students' reports show they are in danger of failing, they experience a cadre of adults expressing concern. (a) The advisor suggests the tutoring center. (b) The advisor assigns the upperclass mentor to work on homework with the student every day. (c) The counselor stops by during Advisory period, expresses concern, and asks what the student is doing. (d) The parents receive a copy of the progress report.

13. Mandatory Tutoring

If students get a D or F at the six-week mark, they are assigned to mandatory tutoring for two days a week. Teachers send materials for the students

directly to the tutors with assignment sheets and upcoming due dates. Progress is monitored weekly.

14. Guided Study Program

If students fail to improve, the three people on the Student Support Team (SST) for that student (teacher, counselor, and advisor) recommend the student go to the Guided Study Program. The Guided Study Teacher has no more than 10 students during what would otherwise be a study period each day. The SST meets with student and parents to clarify goals and expectations, and to develop a contract. The Guided Study Teacher works with the students on study skills such as using an assignment notebook, creating a schedule to ensure timely completion of work, and developing test prep strategies. She or he also contacts classroom teachers and is the principle liaison between students, staff, and parents on a weekly basis.

15. The Mentor Program

This is two periods of support each day in a small group of 10 students. The first period is similar to Guided Study above. The second period is quasi-therapeutic, the guided study teacher working in close alliance with the social worker. Students with specific problems that are interfering with academic success—substance abuse, anger management, grief, and so on—are also enrolled in student support groups. The mentor and the social worker reserve one evening a month to meet with parents in support groups designed to help parents acquire skills that will make them effective partners in the effort to help their student achieve success.

REFERENCE

- DuFour, R., Eaker, R., Karhanek, G., & DuFour, R. (2004). *Whatever it takes: How professional learning communities respond when kids don't learn*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.