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It Takes a Community: On-Time Graduation for At-Risk Youth

Sheila L. Gray

Washington State University, sgray@wsu.edu

Danielle A. Craig

Washington State University, danielleacraig@gmail.com

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It Takes A Community: On-time graduation for at-risk students

26th National At-Risk Youth Conference
March 3, 2015

Sheila L. Gray, County Director
WSU Lewis County Extension
Chehalis, Washington

AGRICULTURE

YOUTH &
FAMILIES

HEALTH

ECONOMY

ENVIRONMENT

ENERGY

COMMUNITIES



Everybody is a genius.



But if you judge a fish by its
ability to climb a tree, it will
live its whole life believing
that it is stupid.

Albert Einstein.

“5-H” Conference Strands

- I. “Head”: Academic Achievement & Leadership
- II. “Heart”: Social & Emotional Skills
- III. “Hands”: Safety & Violence Prevention
- IV. “Health”: Mental & Physical Health
- V. “Home”: Family & Community

Today's Presentation Focus Areas

- I. “Head”: Academic Achievement & Leadership
 - Closing achievement gaps and promoting learning for all children and youth

- V. “Home”: Family & Community
 - Developing and enhancing family and community support for all children and youth



Cultivating Youth: the Goals

- Provide at-risk high school students the opportunity to learn about entrepreneurship at a college course level.
- Experience an introduction to higher education.
- Learn small business elements as a practical life application and put them to work.
- Provide an adult connection outside of school and family.

What is an “at risk” student?

- Include a wide variety of students:
 - including ethnic minorities
 - academically disadvantaged
 - disabled
 - low socio-economic status
 - and students on a probationary status.

Why Offer this Opportunity?

- In Washington State, funding for alternative schools has diminished to the point that many have had to close their doors, no longer able to continue transforming the lives of at-risk students.
- Alternative educators are more than teachers—they are parents and mentors, advocates and listeners.

The Partners

Salvation Army

Lewis County
High School
Districts



WSU Lewis
County
Extension

Centralia
College

Lewis County
Juvenile Court

The Partners

- The Salvation Army (non-profit)
- Centralia & Chehalis High Schools (public schools)
- Centralia College (secondary education)
- Lewis County Juvenile Court (corrections)
- WSU Lewis County Extension (outreach education)

The Salvation Army (SA) Garden Site & Classroom

- The SA garden site is approximately 2 acres in size in a residential area with access to public transportation for the students.



Centralia & Chehalis High Schools

At-risk students are recruited from local high schools to apply for participation in the Cultivating Youth program.

The program includes modules on leadership, self-esteem, community service, and building a skill set (writing a resume, interview skills) for future employment.

Two Birds, One Stone

- Students who pass the Entrepreneur: Intro to Small Business & Marketing courses receive both college credits and elective credits towards their high school diploma.
- Earned high school credits help the students stay on track to *graduate on time* with their peers.



Centralia College (CC)

- The oldest continuously operating community college in the state of Washington. It was founded in 1925.
- The college has an enrollment of approximately 10,444.
- CC is located in the center of the city of Centralia on a tree-lined campus.



Tech Prep: Centralia College & Cultivating Youth

- Tech Prep is a technical education initiative combining high school and post-secondary education.
- It is a cooperative agreement between Centralia College and high schools in Lewis (Centralia and Chehalis) and South Thurston Counties.



What is Extension?

- There are three primary areas to the WSU Land Grant University: academia, research and extension.
- WSU Extension is the outreach education arm of the Washington State University.
- There are offices in each of the 39 counties in Washington. Most are located in the county seat.

Washington State University (WSU) Lewis County Extension

- My office is located in Southwest Washington State in the community of Chehalis (pop. 7,200).
-about midway between Seattle WA and Portland OR.



-Lewis County has a population base of 76,000 and is on the Interstate 5 corridor between Seattle and Portland.

Primary outreach education volunteer programs

- Extension is home to the 4-H Youth and Development program and the Master Gardeners, Food Safety Advisors as well as offering non-credit community outreach education workshops and training.



How does Extension tie into the program?

- 4H programs focus on youth development aspects
- Master Gardener programs focus on the culture of plants, whether flowers, fruits & vegetables or trees and shrubs.
- Food Safety ensures that the harvested fruits and vegetables are cleaned and stored safely for consumption.

Cultivating Youth Students

Most of the students are either sophomores or juniors in high school.

Participating at these grade levels allows time to retrieve credits and catch up to *graduate on time*.



Cultivating Youth: Mind & Matter

- Our mission is to provide innovative and effective programs that inspire and ready youth for careers in the agricultural industries and small business.



From this...



To this!



Which project partners did what?

- High schools and juvenile center identify and recommend students to apply for the Cultivating Youth program as well as the college course series.
- The college provides enrollment and credit for the course as well as a tuition waiver.



Site and classroom host

The Lewis County Salvation Army hosts the classroom for the delivery of the course to the high school students.

Cultivating Youth garden produce is donated to the SA food bank.



WSU Lewis County Extension Role

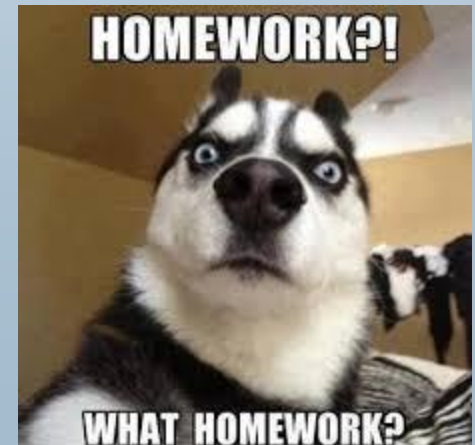
Developed the curricula in a format that is student friendly to at-risk high school students.

Facilitates the course over an 8-10 week (college quarter) on a one-day a week schedule for 3 hours.



Yes, there is homework...

- Provide support for homework questions to the students via telephone or email.
- Evaluate homework, participation, chapter quizzes, and conduct a pre/post evaluation of student gains of learning.



Earning Dual Credits

- The program allows a student to *simultaneously* earn high school and college credit while enrolled in and attending classes at their high school.
- The Entrepreneurship: Intro to Small Business & Marketing classes are offered through this partnership and are linked to the Tech Prep program.

Why this population?

- They need an academic boost.
- To break a generational cycle regarding the value of education within their families.
- College is a foreign concept.
- Some find academics to be boring, or a waste of their time.
- Lack of support at home.



Connecting to their Real World

- How to “hook” the attention of your students
- Each session begins with a sharing of a positive “high light” of week in-between sessions. Presenter participates. This creates a rapport and develops trust with another adult outside of their family unit.



“YOLO”



Connecting with Your Students



- Integrating weekly assignments with everyday life.



Feature familiar goods and products in conversations ranging from fashion to music to trends to fast food.

As another adult outside of school or home there is subtle mentoring taking place.



Meet the Students



Edgar



Quiet, soft spoken, artistic and has dreams about going to college, then opening up his own small business.

He worries about not having money to pay for college. He holds two part-time jobs and goes to school full time.

His work and interactive conversations reflect he has college level skills.

The on-time graduation rate for Hispanic males is 2 out of 3.



Hyacinth

- She is a Native American high school student who comes from a four generation family home. She will be the first in her family to graduate from high school.
- Hyacinth takes care of her younger siblings and prepares dinner for everyone each evening.
- Wants to be the FIRST in her family to graduate from high school AND go to college to study literature and become an author and a publisher.
- On-time graduation rates for Native Americans is 1 out of 3.

Hybridizing a Course through the “Flipped Classroom” Method

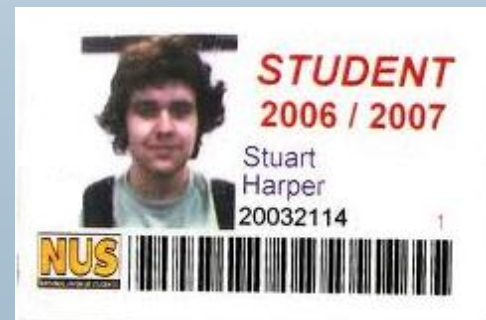
- Talking head vs. active interactive conversations?
- Many heads create more interaction and ideas.
- Comfort zones & teachable moments.
- Review of reading, homework is done in class; and conversations reflect how it relates to their daily life.

Just Another Day in “School” ?

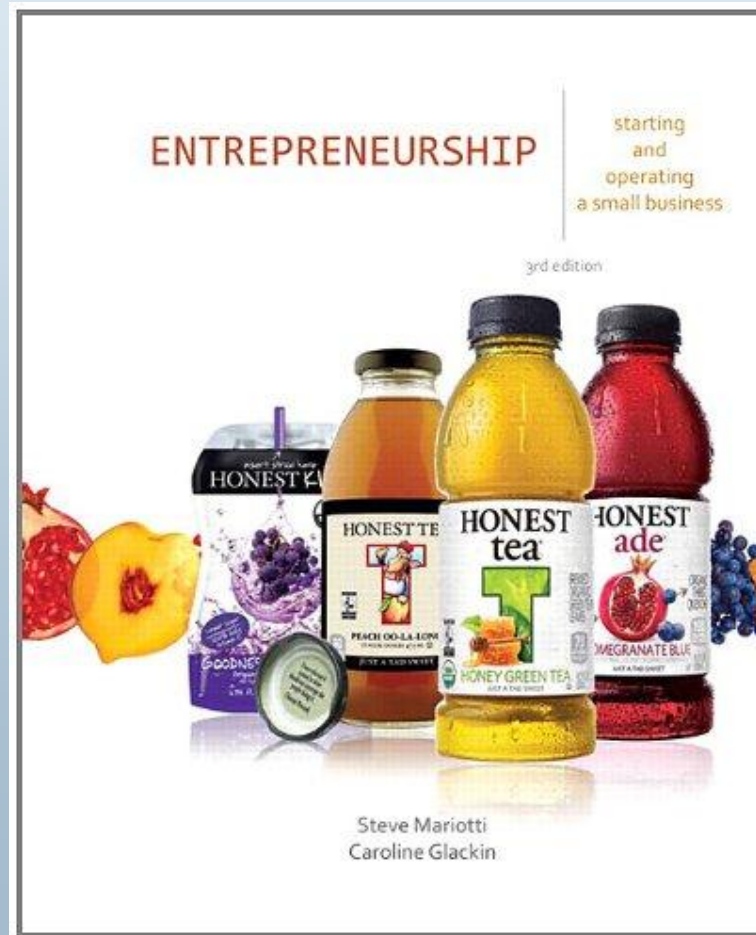
Hybridizing the course through the flip classroom method allows for greater student and presenter interaction.

Students receive community college photo ID cards.


The interview assignment puts students in touch directly with a small business owner.



The Text



The Course

- 10 weeks of 4 hours per session once a week; 40 class hours plus Saturday “lab” day at the garden site or participating in a community service volunteer project
- 5 quarter college credits are earned.
- Thursdays, 1-5 pm.
-  Instructor is available for homework questions via email or voice mail between sessions

The Curricula

- Weekly assignments linked to chapter readings in text, attendance and class participation.
(75% of grade)
- Small business owner interview and presentation.
(25% of grade)
- Assignments and interview are point based.
- Grading scale is based on college level system.

The Introductory Chapter: Leadership & Ethics within a Business

- We start out with leadership. We talk about the owner of a small business or a manager functions as a leader for their employees.
- What are important qualities when “hiring” or becoming an employee?
- Their answers were: honesty, courtesy, being on time and putting in the full shift of work.

Sample Curricula Chapter: Exploring Your Market for Success

- How do you convince future potential small business owners that success can be achieved?
- Know your potential customer base first, then move forward.
- How do you know your product will be of enough interest that people will buy it not once but repeatedly?

The Difference from “regular” School

- Introduce the course with college level expectations.
- Impress upon students that education is a set of building blocks and that this course allows them to set a foundation for their future in higher education.
- Also let them know that the college credits they earn now will wait for them.

Start here →



Education: Does it really matter?

- **“Learn More to Earn More.”**
- Over a lifetime there are vast differences in earning capacity based on education.
- The range in lifetime earnings varies greatly from a non-high school graduate to that of a doctorate.



Lifetime Earning Power

- Studies continue to confirm that the greater investment in one's self through higher education, the greater potential for lifetime earning power.
- The equation: education = money = lifestyle options



How to improve future earnings?

- Many people believe the answer lies in getting a college education.
- On average, people who go to college earn more than those who don't.
- At-risk students need encouragement to stay on the path to success, one step at a time...

The Value of Education over a Lifetime

2014 Median US Earning by Education



History of the program

- The curricula has been delivered for five years
- It is a point based curriculum. This is explained at each session. The students need to do the assignments to receive points towards their final grade.
- The interview is worth approximately 25% of the course grade. Without it the student grade drops significantly.

The Outcome

- Students achieve college level course credits and high school elective credits to either catch them up or keep them on track to graduate on time.
- Students have a greater understanding of entrepreneurship and how small business relates to their everyday lives. It gives them hope for their future.



How the Graduation Rates Have Changed

In 2010, the overall dropout rate for Centralia HS overall was 27.5% compared to the 2014 overall dropout rate of 18%. One in five is an improvement over one in four.

Dropout rates are still high, yet with alternative programs and opportunities we are seeing a gradual increase in on-time graduation.

Is this course something that can be done in YOUR community?

- Absolutely!
- It is a matter of gathering partners together from each entity to determine roles and responsibilities.
- The ultimate goal is to introduce at-risk high school (sophomores and juniors) youth to their future possibilities that can include upper education opportunities

Sources:

- Text: Entrepreneurship: Starting and Operating a Small Business, 2nd ed. Mariotti and Glackin
- Learn More, Earn More: Understanding how education increases earning potential, www.aie.org
- The College Payoff, cew.georgetown.edu
- Education & Motivation, www.motivation-tools.com/
- Public High School Graduation Rates, www.erdcddata.wa.gov
- National Education Association,
<http://neatoday.org/2013/02/11/alternative-schools-raise-graduation-rates-2/>

Contact info:

- Sheila L. Gray
- WSU Lewis County Extension
- sgray@wsu.edu
- 360-740-1214

Thank You!

- Questions?
- Comments?

