

**Minnesota Principal's Academy- Action Learning Project  
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**Academic Coaching of Students for High Levels of Engagement in Learning  
Hopkins High School**

**Abstract**

This Action Learning Project focused on an evaluation of a strategy called Academic Coaching, used at Hopkins High School, through an extensive three year grant, to continue to strive for high student engagement, leading to higher student achievement. At Hopkins High School, our vision is to be "a vital community asset focused on citizenship and high academic achievement for all students." Our mission is "to ensure all students graduate with the skills necessary for post-secondary success." Our belief statements include "utilizing diverse instructional strategies to increase engagement and student performance." As Hopkins High School continues to diversify, we have a wide achievement gap. Many of our teachers are still teaching in the traditional framework focusing on their curriculum, instead of on student learning. We were looking for best practice strategies to really change the focus of our staff members to student learning and engagement, rather than the sole focus being on curriculum.

Thus, one of our engagement strategies is academic coaching. Staff members are trained over the course of three days, following a collaborative, guided process of inquiry and discovery that brings out the best in others. Coaches are trained to create safe, confidential spaces to work with students, reflecting on goals, dreams, and challenges. Staff members then work with students chosen for coaching, designing action plans to move forward, identifying students' values and strengths while connecting to goals, helping them to become aware of limiting beliefs, judgments, and obstacles that get in the way of progress, and meet for regular check ins to ensure attainment of goals.

In this third year, evaluation of effectiveness for continuation of efforts toward institutionalization and sustainability proved important, to make decisions to continue the strategy when working with students. We have found through evaluation of students' grades, attendance, survey feedback data, and anecdotal stories that academic coaching is successful as a strategy to enhance student engagement and should continue its institutionalization in our work at Hopkins High School.

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**Who?**

- 10-12 high school
- 1,700 students
- 41% students of color
- 38% students signed up for free/reduced lunch
- 11% English Language Learners
- 46 different languages

**Why?**

- With changing demographics, we have a wide achievement gap.
- Many teachers still teaching in traditional framework, focusing on curriculum instead of student learning.

- Trying to change the focus and supporting this change with professional development.

**Student Engagement Strategies:**

|                   |  |  |   |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
| Academic Coaching | CLR-Culturally and Linguistic Responsive Teaching and Learning | AVID- Advancement Via Individual Determination | SIOP-Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol |
|-------------------|--|--|---|

**What?**

- Systematic model for guiding students through the process of:
  - Setting goals
  - Setting action steps to achieve goals
  - Discuss limiting beliefs
  - Achieve goals through hard work and commitment
- Helps students define where they are at presently in their lives and where they want to go.

**Goal:**

- To build capacity to sustain and institutionalize academic coaching among as many staff members across curricular areas, and among as many student leaders as possible at Hopkins High School.
- To evaluate its effectiveness for HHS students being coached.

**Program Effectiveness:**

- Attendance
- Grades
- Student surveys
- Anecdotal stories from students

**Survey Data from students coached:**

| Questions   | Yes | No | %Yes |
|---|-----|----|------|
| I am more on task in class since coaching.  | 112 | 3  | 97%  |
| I have a more positive attitude since coaching  | 113 | 4  | 97%  |
| I put in more effort into understanding class content since coaching through reviewing and completing class work. | 116 | 2  | 98%  |
| I am thinking more empowering thoughts about myself since coaching  | 108 | 8  | 93%  |
| I am setting more goals since coaching.   | 112 | 4  | 97%  |
| I am taking more actions to achieve my goals since coaching:  | 115 | 2  | 98%  |
| I have a better relationship with my teacher since coaching.  | 104 | 13 | 89%  |