AMP-ing Up Student Success! Assessing Amherst Central High School’s Academic Monitoring Program (AMP)

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INTRODUCTION

Students at risk of failing can earn better grades with the assistance of a trained adult tutor who can teach them critical strategies for how to learn and perform in a school setting (Hock, Pulvers, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2001).

Amherst Central High School’s Academic Monitoring Program (AMP) is an after-school-based intervention designed to provide support and direction to students struggling to maintain their academic performance. Student progress is regularly tracked by teachers who work with them one-on-one. These program staff maintain consistent communication with participant’s classroom teachers to identify growth and areas for improvement.

By examining AMP attendance and report cards, this study will determine whether the AMP program achieves its intended results. In addition, program staff were interviewed to learn about opportunities to expand these efforts to further enhance student achievement from within AMP.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

School-based educational intervention programs can lead to an increase in academic achievement and student learning across different types of student needs and subject matter (Nelson-Royes, 2013). These interventions help to improve deficiencies that students experience in targeted academic areas. The interventions are designed to assist the students in becoming more organized, self-assured, and focused as well by providing one-on-one assistance.

Established in 2013, Amherst Central High School’s AMP program provides academic support and homework assistance to students. The program does this through skill building and one-on-one assistance. AMP is held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 3:25pm to 4:25pm. Students have the option to voluntarily attend the program for two to three days per week once enrolled. AMP staff includes two special education teachers who are responsible for coordinating and maintaining the program.

Students are typically referred to the program through the school’s instructional support team. Teachers, administrators, and counselors serving on this team identify students with academic concerns on an “as needed” basis. AMP participants are enrolled for five-week periods. Within these periods, the AMP team discuss completion, continuation, or removal from the program. If a student is consistently absent or disruptive, they may be dismissed from the program.

Student progress on homework completion is tracked by the AMP team on a weekly basis. AMP teachers are in regular communication with teachers as well as the instructional support team to discuss student grade improvement. The present study seeks to determine the effectiveness of the program by examining attendance and improvements in the student’s quarterly grade point average (GPA).

LOGIC MODEL

Long-Term Outcomes

• Improved GPA (Quarterly)

Intermediate Outcomes

• Increased use of AMP team support for academic assistance
• Increased AMP attendance

Short-Term Outcomes

• Increased knowledge of study skills through homework support
• Increased awareness of available academic support

Outputs

• Number of students attending; days attending; students needing assistance; teachers present

Activities

• AMP Teachers assist students with academics; offer support resources; communicate with classroom teachers

• Students, teachers, parents and guardians, classroom space, school materials, Internet, technology access, report cards

METHODOLOGY

Design: This study utilized a program outcome evaluation to determine if the program impacts the target population’s problems (academic performance) as identified in the program description. This evaluation draws upon participant’s program attendance data as well overall quarterly grades to better understand the program’s effectiveness as well as potential areas for improvement.

Interventions: AMP Staff provides academic support and resources to program participants while also providing them with homework assistance.

Hypothesis: Greater participation in AMP yields improved academic performance (as measured by quarterly GPA).

MEASURES:

• Program measures were collected from AMP staff and include AMP attendance and report cards (for use in gathering quarterly GPA score).
• Students were classified as having either above or below average attendance for the AMP program by utilizing the average (mean) attendance score.
• Students were also classified as having an improved or maintained quarterly GPA or a decreased GPA during the first and second quarter for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years.
• Program staff were also interviewed during this study to determine key program strengths and challenges as well as recommendations for improvement that could be implemented to ensure the success of the program.

RESULTS

A total of 24 students participated in the AMP program during the first and second quarters of the 2017-2018 school year. Among these participants, only six (6) had above average AMP attendance (8.5 days or higher). A paired t-test was used to determine if there were significant differences between below average (M=1.10; SD=4.43) and the above average attendance group (M=3.23; SD=6.80) with regard to quarterly GPA score. Once again, results show that above average attenders GPA scores were actually lower than below average attenders.

A total of 24 students participated in the AMP program during the first and second quarters of the 2018-2019 school year. Among these participants, ten (10) had above average AMP attendance (5.3 days or higher). A paired t-test was used to determine if there were significant differences between below average (M=1.10; SD=4.43) and the above average attendance group (M=3.23; SD=6.80) with regard to quarterly GPA score. Once again, results show that above average attenders GPA scores were lower than below average attenders.

CONCLUSIONS

This program outcome evaluation was completed to determine if a student’s attendance in the AMP program yielded improved academic performance as measured by their quarterly GPA. There is no evidence to support the study hypothesis.

Study limitations include the lack of student grades for other quarters as comparable data was only available for the first and second quarter for each school year. Timing of AMP program enrollment and participation (i.e. early semester versus late semester) is also an important consideration for future research as is student characteristics. Additional research should be undertaken to better understand this important program.

REFERENCES
