

Wyoming School-University Partnership

Wyoming Transition Programs Case Study Sheridan County School District #1 Dayton and Ranchester, Wyoming Point B Program

Program Goals and Inception

Sheridan County has two high schools, and the Point B program is active at both high schools. They named the program “Point B” because “Point A” represents where the students are in high school and the K-12 system, while “Point B” represents what students do after high school. Sheridan County School District #1 Point B Program began when the principals at Big Horn and Tongue River High Schools both decided they wanted to design their program after the Career Academies Model. The principals started this program because they wanted to ask their graduates “what will you do the morning you wake up after graduation?” After they know the answer to this question, the schools and students use backwards design to get students where they want to go after graduation.

The Point B Program began about 5-6 years ago but has been developing over the last few years. Some district teachers and counselors were originally involved in the Point B Program, but the district got a two-year grant to hire a career coach who developed a district-wide program. The Career Coach is the point person for both schools to make sure students are getting the same experience on both sides of the district. The Career Coach was given direction and guidance with a lot of freedom to work on developing the program.

Sheridan County School District #1 is big geographically but does not have a large number of students; and all the students at both high schools are involved in the Point B Program. The principals wanted to cut out the middleman and go straight to the community. They realized they were limited by geography but they wanted to build up the K-12 system and help the communities by building a future work system. For both high schools, community members are involved in several aspects of the Point B Program.

Program Description

The Point B Program has several overall overarching philosophies and mindsets:

- In a healthy community everyone is important, and we should invest in our kids with that perspective;
- No Point B is better than another, all Point Bs are equal;

- Habits define us, and if schools can help students develop good habits, they will help students get to their Point B;
- Healthy competition between both high schools can help each school be the best;
- Even though there is healthy competition, administrators work together to best serve their students; and
- Vertical alignment is important in K-12 education and extends that beyond high school.

Over time, the schools help students navigate towards their Point B. In 8th grade school counselors ask students “What is your Point B?” Students take a career class in 9th grade that builds awareness and focuses on post-graduation possibilities. In 10th grade, students focus on exploring the pathways that interest them. For example, if a student wants to be a welder or an engineer, they think about all the different pathways to that career. When students are in 11th grade, they participate in mock interviews with community members, take personal finance classes, and conduct job shadowing. In 12th grade, students are involved in internships or work experience, and they work on putting their post-graduation plan into place.

Mock interviews are an important component of the Point B Program. Before the mock interviews, students prepare by practicing interview questions, writing resumes, and creating cover letters. The career coach organizes mock interviews in early December, when people from the community interview students. Eleventh graders from both high schools go to a large hotel to interview with at least three community members from three different fields that have been matched to the students’ interests. After the mock interviews, the students work with the career coach to figure out which community member they would like to shadow. In April, eleventh graders shadow one of the three community members they decided would be a good fit from their mock interviews.

The Point B Program varies a little by high school. Tongue River High School focuses more on the 9th and 10th grade components and follows up with students with a survey one to two years after graduating. Big Horn High School tries to stay in touch with students for 5 years after graduation. Tongue River is working on following-with students up to five years, and Big Horn High School is working on their 9th and 10th grade components.

Stakeholder Perspectives: Program Coordinators and Administrators

The Point B Program is continuing to evolve and grow. The school administrator reaches out to community members to foster relationships and ask how they can improve their program. The different high schools are working on different things while learning from each other about how to grow the Point B Program.

Even though the high schools are rivals, they play off competition to be number one. Students are very capable, and they push students to be their best. When there are high expectations for all students, students rise to the expectations.

The Career Coach has the flexibility to make connections within the community while also reaching outside of the county to find good matches for the students. They ask community members if they would be interested in helping students with their Point B. The career coach also tries to address barriers that might arise. For example, if the career coach cannot find a community member that matches a student's interest, they look outside of the community. When students were interested in marine biology, the career coach contacted the Clearwater Marina in Florida and set up a Zoom interview.

The Career Coach uses networking to build community awareness about the Point B Program and to place students. She goes to local businesses and asks them how they can partner together. The Career Coach also partners with the local community college for planning days and demonstration days for different trades.

Stakeholders said they would like to see students starting earlier with the Point B Program. The high school would like to partner with the elementary and middle school to help build awareness about the Point B Program.

Stakeholder Perspectives: Community Members

Community members are supportive by participating in the interview process, working with students to experience the career firsthand, and communicating with interested students about their occupation. One community member emphasized that it is important to give students as many opportunities as possible. This community member provided free access to software they use for their occupation to the school district. The community member sees the Point B Program as a way to help both the community and school.

Program Data: These data are from the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years

Number of mock interviews (2022-2023): 219

Number of demo day participants (2022-2023): 116

Number of college planning days (2023-2024): 97

Number of dual/concurrent enrollment (2022-2023): 80 Tongue River; 83 Big Horn

Number of job shadows (2022-2023): 73

Number of senior internships: 17

Number of active CTSOs (2023-2024): 4

Promising Practices

1. Guiding philosophies and mindset that shape the program;
2. Investment in community;
3. Everyone is important, so we should invest in kids in terms of that;
4. Use of backwards design to design program;
5. Healthy competition between high schools to help all the schools and students be the best they can be and also brings up all students in district;

6. Post-graduation follow-up for 1-5 years;
7. Treating all of students' Point Bs as equal;
8. Partnering with local businesses, community members, and community college;
9. Allocating resources equitably to prepare their students for post-graduation;
10. Provide as many resources as they can to students;
11. Professional networking and community building;
12. Developing career portfolio