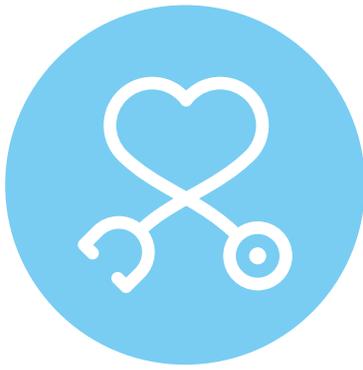


HPOG PROMISING PRACTICE

EDUCATION, TRAINING, & SUPPORT SERVICES

Work Attributes Toward Careers in Health (WATCH)
at Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit

 MILTON, PA



Advancing Social Capital via Enhanced Networks & Training (ASCENT)

Some researchers believe they have identified the “secret sauce” to success. If all else aligns—postsecondary and employment pathways, economic supports, early childhood education, and health and well-being—it’s the final core ingredient to propel an individual out of poverty and into economic self-sufficiency. What is it? Social capital—the networks, friends, and neighbors that encourage and support initial and continued success.

In June 2018, **Work Attributes Toward Careers in Health (WATCH)**, a Health Profession Opportunity Grant based in rural central Pennsylvania, applied for the Institute of Educational Leadership’s Minds That Move Us (MTMU) initiative. WATCH developed Team ASCENT (Advancing Social Capital via Enhanced Networks & Training). ASCENT is designed to integrate into existing programs and builds participants’ social capital using technology. ASCENT consists of peer ambassadors, representatives from WATCH, Adult Education, Central Susquehanna LPN Career Center, Geisinger Medical Center’s Nursing Assistant Residency Program, and Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation.

In August 2018, Team ASCENT was one of ten teams invited to participate in the MTMU Design Camp in Nashville, TN. Team ASCENT introduced their concept, met with coaches, and received valuable insights from the best practices presented by other teams and presentations by key speakers. Team ASCENT was inspired by a presentation at Design Camp from VALUEUSA which emphasized the importance of student engagement through recruitment, retention, resources and reform.

WATCH developed ASCENT’s peer-to-peer networks using technology to build social capital. In Fall 2018, ASCENT conducted focus groups of licensed practical nurse (LPN) students, adult learners, and English Language Learners to identify the barriers faced when balancing student

and home life. ASCENT learned that unstable childcare, unreliable transportation, and uncertain finances challenged them all. Academic needs included tutors, mentors, and knowledge of community resources. While most students have limited time to build support networks, they are eager to explore and share their successes and lessons learned on the internet and social media.

Social capital is a powerful tool in moving families beyond poverty. Relationships are the best hidden asset. They manifest as peer support, contact with supportive family and friends, and involvement in the community, school and workplace. ASCENT uses technology to build social capital in a rural region. A private ASCENT Facebook group enables participants to share successes. Peers can also seek advice on how to overcome barriers such as childcare, transportation, and community resources.

A texting platform built by Team ASCENT and Signal Vine sends nudges to keep students informed, engaged, and on track. ASCENT contracted with WATCH’s local evaluator, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE). Together they conducted an evaluation of participants’ social capital, results of a text messaging pilot, and recommendations for taking the pilot to scale. A survey of new LPN students indicated that they want text messages to not only inform, but to inspire and make them laugh.

By monitoring current and future trends in healthcare and technology, Team ASCENT is setting the next generation of healthcare workers in central Pennsylvania up for success.

This Promising Practice was self-identified by the grantee and information contained in this document was provided by the grantee.