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After School Program: Hunterdon Central Regional High School

Implementation Context:

Hunterdon Central Regional High School is a public high school located in historic Hunterdon County in central New Jersey. Hunterdon Central Regional High School (HCRHS) serves the five municipalities of Delaware Township, East Arnwell Township, Flemington Borough, Raritan Township, and Readington Township.

One of the largest, campus-style high school districts in New Jersey, the school occupies a 72-acre campus and includes four general classroom buildings, a music building, a 2,000 seat fieldhouse, and an Instructional Media Center. There are over 1,350 networked computer stations campus-wide, and two state-of-the-art multimedia computer labs.

For the 2003/2004 academic year, student enrollment was approximately 2,750, with 550 students in the 12th grade. The average class size at Hunterdon is 22 students, with a student to computer ratio of 2:1.

In 2002, Hunterdon became the only New Jersey school to be awarded the status of Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education for the second time. In the class of 2003, 92% of graduates planned on attending some form of post secondary education (78% planned to attend a 4-year college; 11% planned to attend a 2-year college; and 3% planned to attend a trade/technical school).

In order to graduate from HCRHS, students must receive a passing score on the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment test. In 2003, 89% of HCRHS graduates took the SAT I.

Course of Action:

Hunterdon Central Regional High School for nine years now has been holding an SAT Review Course in preparation for the October PSAT and the November, December and May and June SAT's. It is a 45-hour review course taught by certified math and English teachers. Students (sophomores to seniors) learn test-taking tips as well as skill review. In the past, the course has used textbooks and flashcards…as well as practice tests. But, this year they were able to offer testGEAR as well.

The SAT Review Course is offered twice a year beginning in August and January, with each participant paying $325. The teacher-to-student ratio of the course is 1 to 10 (therefore, if there are 60 students, they have six classes operating at a time). The classes traditionally meet on Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. until 12 noon. August classes meet on weekday evenings from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. It is recommended that students take the SAT immediately following the course. Nine years ago, the school started the session with just 20 students – and just broke even. This semester, approximately 60 to 80 students signed up for the program.

When the information for testGEAR came to the College and Career Counselor at HCRHS this year, she said they felt it was something that would cover everyone's needs. Not everyone at the school can afford the time to take the Review Class on the weekends, as it sometimes doesn't

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work for the students' schedule. Those who cannot afford the full price of the review course can still attend -- if they are a Federal lunch program student they only have to pay 10%. If they cannot afford the program, scholarships are offered through the course thanks to a fund established with surplus money from the program each year.

The school was able to purchase testGEAR through the extra funds collected from the SAT Review Class. This enabled the students in the SAT Review Course to use it as well as opening it up to the rest of the students in the school.

The College and Career Counselor says there is a high demand for the after-school program, and the cost of $325 is an amount most parents in their community are able to pay.

The money collected for the after-school course pays for two textbooks per student, flashcards, teacher salaries and the school's testGEAR subscription.

In the after-school class, they use testGEAR to augment their existing program. If a student has a problem in a certain area, the teacher will suggest they go in and take one of the practice quizzes. The students like using testGEAR and are able to use it when they miss one of the courses. Their teacher is able to tell them which practorials to take to help them understand the information that they missed.

Students really like the convenience of having testGEAR available at school and at home. Students' marks are continually improving. A five-year study at the school showed that with the help of this after-school course, student scores were raised by an average of 80 points.