Nudging Foster Youth to College Success: Leveraging Mobile Technology & Behavioral Science

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OUR APPROACH

LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

APPLY SMALL NUDGES

FOSTER SUCCESS
WE ADDRESS COMMON CHALLENGES

- I feel like I don’t belong.
- I don’t know how to manage my time.
- I’m too afraid to ask for help.
- I feel overwhelmed.
- I don’t have a support system.
- I feel stupid.
STEREOTYPE THREAT

If I get a bad grade, maybe I don’t really belong in college.

If I get a bad grade, I’ll prove people right that I’m dumb.

If I get a bad grade, people will think all foster youth are dumb.

Steele & Aronson (1995)
SOCIAL BELONGING INTERVENTION

Upperclassmen vignettes
• Normalize struggle
• Cast struggle as transient

Speech for future students
• “Saying-is-believing”
• Be the benefactor

Walton & Cohen (2011)
Adjusting to a New Environment
Some of the relationships I had with family made my transition difficult, and financially my transition was really hard because housing can be expensive. But environmentally, it was pretty adjustable. Being a former foster youth in that sense is an advantage since you’ve already had the process of overcoming challenges and had to adjust to a lot of new environments already.

Knowing What I Know Now
I learned that as a former foster youth, I had a maturity factor that not everyone else had. Drinking and stuff didn’t interest me in the way it seemed to interest other people. I did have the mindset to do it all on my own, but I learned to build my network and get help.
GROWTH MINDSET INTERVENTION

Scholastic Pen Pals program

• Control (no letters)
• Multiple intelligences (fixed)
• Growth mindset

Aronson, Fried, & Good (2002)
THE POWER OF THE NUDGE

5x MORE LIKELY TO SEEK TUTORING

12 PERCENTAGE POINTS HIGHER PERSISTENCE FOR FIRST GEN STUDENTS

14 PERCENTAGE POINTS HIGHER PASSING RATE IN INTRO TO MATH COURSE

7 PERCENTAGE POINTS HIGHER YEAR-TO-YEAR PERSISTENCE FOR STUDENTS IN DEVELOPMENTAL COURSES
GUARDIAN SCHOLARS PILOT

Goals
- Understand use of mobile support to extend existing services for college-going foster youth
- Feedback on how college-going foster youth respond and utilize mobile support

Ongoing partnerships
- Fall 2014 – University of California Riverside
- Spring 2015 – Moreno Valley College
- Fall 2015 – Riverside City College
- Fall / Winter 2015 – UCLA
GETTING STARTED WITH A PARTNER COLLEGE

- Process requires minimal college staff time and enables customized nudging from start
- Data upload creates individual student profiles
- P+ team works with partners to facilitate enrollment of all students
NUDGE CUSTOMIZATION

Nudges are...

...sent via SMS or iOS/Android app at varied times and doses
...designed based on latest behavioral research
...tailored to student traits and campus context
...aligned with calendar of school(s)
79% of students still using P+ at end of year

92% of students responded at least once
  • Over 50% responded at least 15 times
  • Max of 78 responses!

Student response examples:

Prioritize study time, personal responsibilities, map out my week so I have my academic work finished by Saturday afternoon

I studied hard and didn’t fall behind... so I wasn’t as stressed as previous quarters when it seemed like I was always trying to catch up
I really like when [Persistence Plus] sent out a message asking for [our] advice and then we sent it to other students. This was really cool because we got to see other people’s advice.

Messages have definitely been helpful… the reminder was good.

[I] like the tips and the type of emotional support. Makes me feel like I’m not the only person struggling.

There’s somebody looking out for you… giving you the support if you need stability to do well in your classes.
TAKEAWAYS

• Mobile communication is an effective and scalable way to reach foster youth
• Small interventions can have big effects
• Customizing nudges for foster youth requires thinking about housing, transportation, and food challenges
• Thanks to Foster Care Counts, we are able to support foster youth at more colleges this year
  • If interested, come talk to me!
THANK YOU

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