

ASK Program Overview

1. Team: Jim Solomon, Coordinator and English teacher; Jeremy Cogan, Social Studies teacher; Chris Bivona, Social Worker (half time).
2. History: 37 years, last modified about 20 years ago with the addition of a part time social worker.
3. Student Population: 45-50 students in two core groups, grades 10-12. Candidates for ASK have not achieved their academic potential. ASK students possess average to excellent ability, but have not earned comparable marks and some are at risk of dropping out of school.
4. Credits Earned: 2 per year—English and social studies. Courses fulfill department requirements—literature and writing for English and American government for social studies. Course descriptions are available.
5. Format: Students meet for two periods of English and social studies. They return during the day for additional academic or other assistance and mentoring. Students also have counseling available to them from the ASK social worker.
6. Social Work Services: a social worker is available to ASK students (half-time) for individual and group counseling, ASK students require a trusting bond with their teachers and clinical support staff in order to open up and confront their issues. The social worker works in the classroom , with small groups and in one on one counseling. In addition, students and parents are referred to outside resources as needed. This may include therapy, drug and alcohol treatment, anxiety clinic, partial hospital programs, community service opportunities, or work experience.
7. Curriculum: The classes focus on themes and issues in contemporary, world society. Combine or taught separately, the classes require reading, writing, thinking and discussing important topics.
8. Selection of Students: The Coordinator researches extensively to identify appropriate candidates. Progress reports, grades, recommendations, testing background, self/peer/parental referrals and interviews are used to select students.
9. Classroom Environment: Positive, student-centered and comfortable. Students are encouraged to take risks and to express themselves. Respect, honesty and accepting responsibility are integral to the personal relationships that make ASK effective.
10. Evaluation: A vast majority of students who have been in ASK desire to continue. Grades and cumulative GPA's generally improve, some significantly. Many graduates go on to college and go on to a variety of careers. ASK has helped over 2000 students strive for greater academic achievement, self-confidence and enhanced future opportunities.