



Graduating Students, One Community at a Time

Program Description:

It was the death of a 13 year old girl who overdosed on drugs during after school hours that spurred the creation of Firewall Centers. That was in 2003. Today, there are four sites in Broward County, Florida where the organization carries out its mission to instill character, values, promote academic success and establish long-term relationships with middle and high school students.

Firewall Centers will use AT&T Aspire funding to support an expansion of its T.H.I.N.K. Leadership program, which is designed to provide youth who are at-risk for academic failure with the resources and guidance needed to improve their high school success and increase their readiness for college and career. Currently, 80 percent of students that attend the program live in single-parent households and over 80 percent receive free or reduced lunch. Statistically, these indicators place them at a higher risk of dropping out of high school and making other negative life choices. Most of these students do not receive academic, goal-setting or career-planning assistance at home because many of their parents have never graduated from high school or are underemployed themselves.

The key strategy of the T.H.I.N.K. Leadership program is to provide youth with multiple adult advocates that working together, establish the consistency, structure and relationship necessary to propel these students towards success.

The Academic Director of Firewall Centers oversees the program and works cooperatively and closely with teachers, counselors and parents/guardians to ensure that youth receive the academic assistance and guidance they need to graduate and move towards a successful future. Her work includes attending parent/teacher conferences, emailing teachers and speaking with school counselors and social workers to advocate on behalf of the students.

Firewall's Student Advisor creates personalized success plans that help all students assess their skills and interests as well as develop realistic academic and career goals. These plans include a complete student profile that allows the advisor to individualize each student's future track for high school graduation and fully prepare them for entrance into college or vocational school. The advisor also assists students in optimizing their school schedule, applying for college, financial aid and scholarships.



Each student is also assigned a Firewall mentor that provides daily homework help and one-on-one tutoring. A student-to-mentor ratio of approximately 10:1 is maintained thus allowing students to receive the individual attention they need to succeed. Firewall Mentors monitor student progress each day through Broward County's grade-tracking system, providing students with daily accountability and continuous feedback.

In the 2011/2012 school year:

- **93 percent** of students maintained or improved their GPA in core academic subjects
- **90 percent** of students completed required yearly academic credits
- **89 percent** of students graduated or re-enrolled in the program
- **85 percent** of students attended the Firewall program on any given day
- **1,917** community service hours were performed by Firewall students



"Firewall has helped me achieve high standards and accomplish what I could only dream of. Firewall provides me with resources and continues to push me on my path to success."

Abner Molina, T.H.I.N.K. Leadership Student