In August 2018, Good Shepherd Services launched a pilot fellowship with school-based programs to come together, learn from one another, and generate new ideas to try in their own contexts. Informed by methods of improvement science, fellows are part of a network that will help GSS get better at solving pressing problems. Fellows worked on the urgent problem of high rates of chronic absenteeism by generating and testing theories of improvement.

**Key Improvement Questions:**
1) Why are students chronically absent?
2) What can we do about it?
3) How will we know if our efforts are an improvement?

### Research & Service HS’s Theory of Change to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

**[ROOT CAUSE]**
Students don’t come to school, in part, because of academic fatigue (they don’t feel like their efforts result in progress toward graduation) and fixed mindset.

**[DRIVER]**
Students need to be hopeful and motivated to persevere.

**[CHANGE IDEA]**
We will help students map their paths to graduation, and have a caring adult check in regularly on progress.

### Plan
What’s your plan? What’s your prediction? How will you make it happen?

Fellows planned to identify 10-15 students who were frequently coming to school (50-80%) but far from graduation. Using a brief conversation guide and a progress to graduation tracker, they planned to meet when report cards were released and check in 2-3 weeks later.

### Do
Execute Plan. Collect Data.

Fellows had individual conferences with six students three times between November and December. They kept a spreadsheet to record student responses and track school attendance.

### Act
Adopt, Adapt, or Abandon.

The conferencing had positive results, and the fellows want to work on fine-tuning and continuing the process. The school is beginning to use the graduation tracker with all students.

### Study
Analyze the results and compare to predictions.

Students appreciated the attention and care, and sought out the fellows to report progress. One student realized in the session that a YABC was a better fit and transferred (and graduated). Most students maintained or improved attendance. Fellows were challenged by the time commitment.

### Attendance Data

Half of the students increased their YTD attendance. Why?

Fellows noticed that students who improved attendance were not already engaged in school activities. Students who did NOT improve were already connected or had a higher frequency of counseling due to personal issues.

### Student Feedback
Students made comments such as “Oh, you’re paying attention to me.” They appreciated being noticed and having an adult believe in their success. A growth mindset survey was given and results varied.

“I showed I could come to school more.”

### Takeaways from Fellowship
- Sharing data with the students creates a powerful visual, and we will continue monitoring data.
- Conferencing differed from normal counseling because the conversations were more focused and utilized a graduation tracker.