Mental Health in Schools
UCLA Center
Program and Policy Analysis

Introductory packet

Dropout Prevention

(Revised 2015)

Dropout Prevention

Intro to the Problem

"Over the past decade, sobering dropout data have led community and school leaders across the country to question with some urgency their own responsibilities to out-of-school youth. Nationally, 1.8 million young adults aged 16.21 are not enrolled in school or have not finished their high school education.[1] Nearly 400,000 students drop out of high school each year.[2] Despite recent gains, graduation rates are 79% or lower in over half the states, and significant attainment gaps persist for urban, minority, immigrant, and low-income youth.[3] African American and Hispanic students appear somewhat more successful than in the past, but large disparities in comparison to White and Asian students still exist. Urban areas demonstrate less success than suburban locations. Persistently, data confirm graduation gaps identifiable by race, ethnicity, immigrant status, family income, disabilities, and English proficiency.[4]

Moreover, national and local leaders across the country are focusing on this issue in response to heightened awareness of the costly economic impact on individuals and communities. Recent reports find:

- 6.7 million youth (aged 16 to 24) are out of school and not in the labor market.[5]

- The immediate taxpayer burden for disconnected youth is estimated at $13,900 per youth per year, and the immediate social burden at $37,450 per year (2011 dollars).[6]

- The earnings gap between those youth earning a college degree versus those earning only a high school diploma is greater than it has been in nearly 50 years; a person with only a high school diploma earns 62% of what is earned by a college graduate. Without even a high school diploma, the earnings gaps are even larger.[7]

Ignoring a high dropout rate is very costly for individuals and their communities. According to a 2012 report by labor economists, youth who have dropped out of high school or college 'are not investing in their human capital or income. Their disconnection represents a significant loss of economic opportunity for the nation.'[8] Students who have dropped out are reported to be disproportionately male and from minority groups, and such students are more likely to be unemployed, involved with the criminal justice system, suffering from mental or physical health conditions, teen parents, or burdened with substantial care-giving responsibilities for other family members. The report recommends targeted investments for disconnected youth and asserts, 'Failure to harness their potential is an opportunity missed – for themselves and society.' Such investments will contribute significantly to near- and long- term economic growth at the state and national levels.

Researchers have given significant attention to the reasons youth drop out. The research suggests that the rates of disconnection from school are a major contributing factor for why youth chose to leave school. Rumberger and Lim reviewed 25 years

of research, and based on the synthesis of the data, the authors found that there are two types of characteristics that describe the reasons students drop out of school, institutional and individual characteristics, which include family, school, and community characteristics. The America's Promise Alliance and the Center for Promise conducted a series of interviews with out-of-school youth and concluded that disengaged students are often navigating toxic environments and face clusters of negative factors. They also emphasized the importance of (and sometimes lack of) relationships and connectedness in both the disengagement and re-engagement process.[9] Additionally, educators have joined with researchers and civic leaders to find ways to stem the dropout tide. The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University has led efforts to create systems that offer early identification of problems and targeted responses aimed at preventing students from leaving school.[10]"

1 National League of Cities. Municipal Action Guide – Reconnecting Youth through Dropout Re-engagement Centers. December 2013.
2 http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1107REENGAGEDROPOUTS.PDF
3 America's Promise Alliance. Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge
4 Civic Enterprises, Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University and America's Promise Alliance. Building a Grad Nation:
Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic. 2012.
5 Retrieved January 16, 2014 from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED528650.pdf
6 Retrieved January 16, 2014 from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED528650.pdf
7 Retrieved February 13, 2014 from
http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/
8 Retrieved January 16, 2014 from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED528650.pdf
9 California Dropout Research Project. *Why Students Drop Out of School: A Review of 25 Years of Research.* October 2008.
10 Civic Enterprises. *Building a Grad Nation.*

IUnderstanding Dropouts and Dropout Prevention

- **Dropout Rates/Data Points**

- **Why Students Dropout**

- **A Major Concern**

- **Federal Perspective of What Works**

- **Prevalence and Risk Factors**

🔲 FAST FACTS

Dropout rates   http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16

Question:
What are the dropout rates of high school students?

Response:
The *status dropout rate* represents the percentage of 16- through 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalency credential such as a General Educational Development [GED] certificate).

Status dropouts are no longer attending school (public or private) and do not have a high school level of educational attainment. Based on data from the Current Population Survey, the status dropout rate decreased from 12 percent in 1990 to 7 percent in 2013, with most of the decline occurring after 2000 (when it was 11 percent). However, there was no measurable difference between the 2012 rate and the 2013 rate.

Between 1990 and 2013, the male status dropout rate declined from 12 to 7 percent, with nearly the entire decline occurring after 2000 (when it was still 12 percent). For females, the rate declined from 12 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2000, and then decreased further to 6 percent in 2013. From 1997 through 2012, the status dropout rate was higher for males than for females, but in 2013 the rate for males was not measurably different from the rate for females.

In each year from 1990 to 2013, the status dropout rate was lower for Whites than for Blacks, and the rates for both Whites and Blacks were lower than the rate for Hispanics. During this period, the rate for Whites declined from 9 to 5 percent; the rate for Blacks declined from 13 to 7 percent; and the rate for Hispanics declined from 32 to 12 percent. As a result, the gap between Whites and Hispanics narrowed from 23 percentage points in 1990 to 7 percentage points in 2013. Most of the gap was narrowed between 2000 and 2013, during which the White-Hispanic gap declined from 21 percent to 7 percent. The rates for both Whites and Blacks declined from 1990 to 2013, but the gap between the rates in 1990 did not measurably differ from the gap between the rates in 2013. However, the White-Black gap of 2 percentage points in 2013 (when rates were 5 and 7 percent, respectively) was smaller than the White-Black gap of 6 percentage points in 2000 (when rates were 7 and 13 percent, respectively).

Status dropout rates of 16- through 24-year-olds, by race/ethnicity: 1990 through 2013
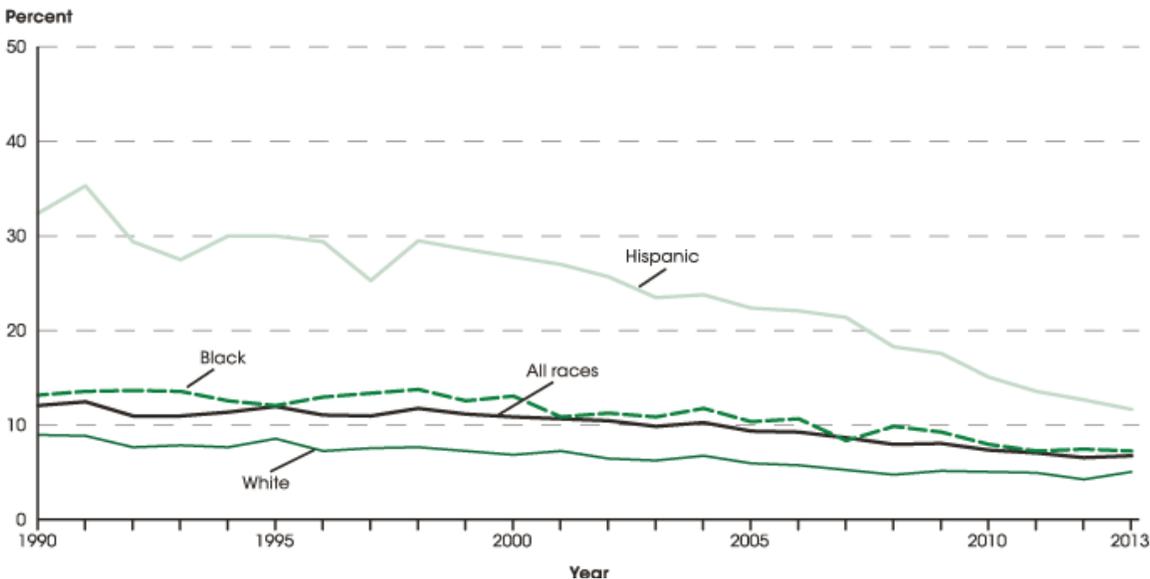

NOTE: The "status dropout rate" represents the percentage of 16- through 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalency credential such as a General Educational Development [GED] certificate). Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons in prisons, persons in the military, and other persons not living in households. Data for all races include other racial/ethnic categories not separately shown. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The Condition of Education 2015* (NCES 2015-144), Status Dropout Rates.

Related Tables and Figures: **(Listed by Release Date)**

- 2015, Digest of Education Statistics 2014, Table 219.70. Percentage of high school dropouts among persons 16 through 24 years old (status dropout rate), by sex and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1960 through 2013
- 2015, Digest of Education Statistics 2014, Table 219.75. Percentage of high school dropouts among persons 16 through 24 years old (status dropout rate), by income level, and percentage distribution of status dropouts, by labor force status and years of school completed: 1970 through 2013

- 2015, Digest of Education Statistics 2014, Table 219.80. Percentage of high school dropouts among persons 16-24 years old (status dropout rate) and # of status dropouts, by noninstitutionalized or institutionalized status, birth in or outside of the U.S., and selected characteristics: 2011 and 2012
- 2014, Digest of Education Statistics 2013, Table 219.71. Population 16 through 24 years old and number of 16- to 24-year-old high school dropouts (status dropouts), by sex and race/ethnicity: 1970 through 2012
- 2014, Digest of Education Statistics 2013, Table 219.76. Population 16 through 24 years old and number of 16- to 24-year-old high school dropouts (status dropouts), by income level, labor force status, and years of school completed: 1970 through 2012

Other Resources: (Listed by Release Date)

- 2015, Early High School Dropouts: What Are Their Characteristics?
- 2015, The Common Core of Data (CCD) Dropouts, Completers and Graduation Rate Reports: These reports present the number and percentage of students dropping out and completing public school.
- 2015, The Common Core of Data (CCD): The CCD is a program that annually collects fiscal and non-fiscal data about all public schools, public school districts and state education agencies in the United States.
- 2015, Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2012
- 2014, Public High School Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates: School Years 2010–11 and 2011–12

National Center for Education Statistics - http://nces.ed.gov
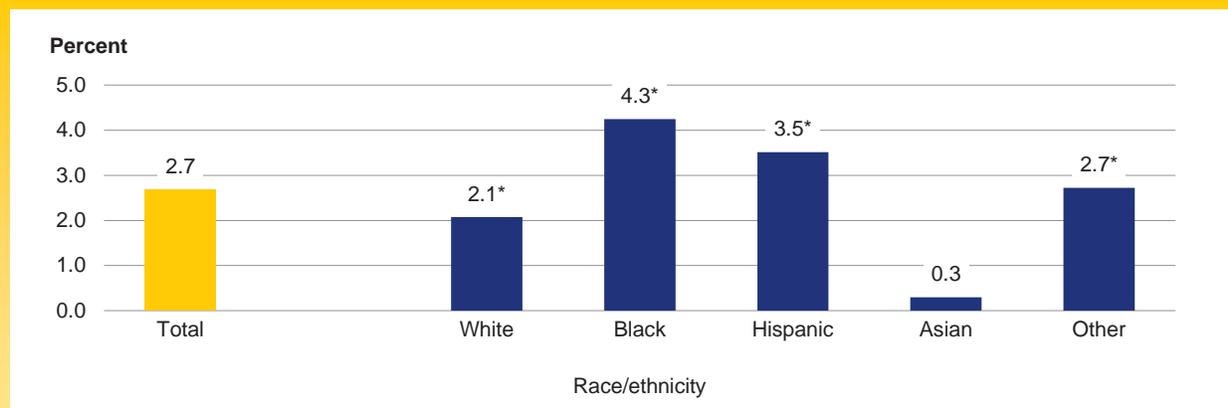U.S. Department of Education

Data from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09), a nationally representative, longitudinal study of more than 23,000 ninth-graders in 2009, were used for this report. HSLS:09 surveyed students, their parents, math and science teachers, school administrators, and school counselors. The study included information about students who were enrolled in school in the fall term of 2009 as ninth-graders and who were not enrolled in school and had not earned a regular high school diploma or alternative credential such as a GED in spring 2012, when they should have been 11th-graders. These students are referred to as "dropouts" in this report.[1]

What percentage of enrolled ninth-graders dropped out of school between fall 2009 and spring 2012 and how did the percentage vary by race/ethnicity?

- Among 2009 ninth-graders, 2.7 percent had dropped out by 2012, when they should have been 11th-graders. (**Figure 1**).

- Dropout rates for Black, Hispanic, and White students were 4.3 percent, 3.5 percent, and 2.1 percent, respectively. Asian students had the lowest dropout rate (0.3 percent).[2] (**Figure 1**).

FIGURE 1. Percentage of 2009 ninth-graders who dropped out of high school, by race/ethnicity: 2012

NOTE: Dropouts are students who were not enrolled in school and had not completed high school or an alternative program as of the 2012 interview. The "Other" group includes American Indian/Alaska Native, More than one race, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. All race categories exclude Hispanic or Latino origin, unless specified. The racial/ethnic group rates with a * were significantly different from the Asian group's rate. Standard error tables are available at http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2015066.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. *High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) First Follow-up Public-Use Data File* (NCES 2014-358).

Data in this report are from the High School Longitudinal Study (HSLS:09) a nationally representative sample survey. To learn more, visit http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/hsls09. For questions about content or to view this report online, go to http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2015066.

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NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS
Institute of Education Sciences

What were the dropout rates of males and females, and how did dropout rates vary by socioeconomic status (SES)?

- Between 2009 and 2012, some 2.7 percent of males and 2.6 percent of females had dropped out, a difference that is not statistically significant. (**Figure 2**).

- About 5 percent of students who were in the lowest fifth of the 2012 SES distribution (first SES quintile) had dropped out between 2009 and 2012. (**Figure 2**).[3]

- In contrast, 0.6 percent of students in the highest fifth of the 2012 SES distribution had dropped out. (**Figure 2**).
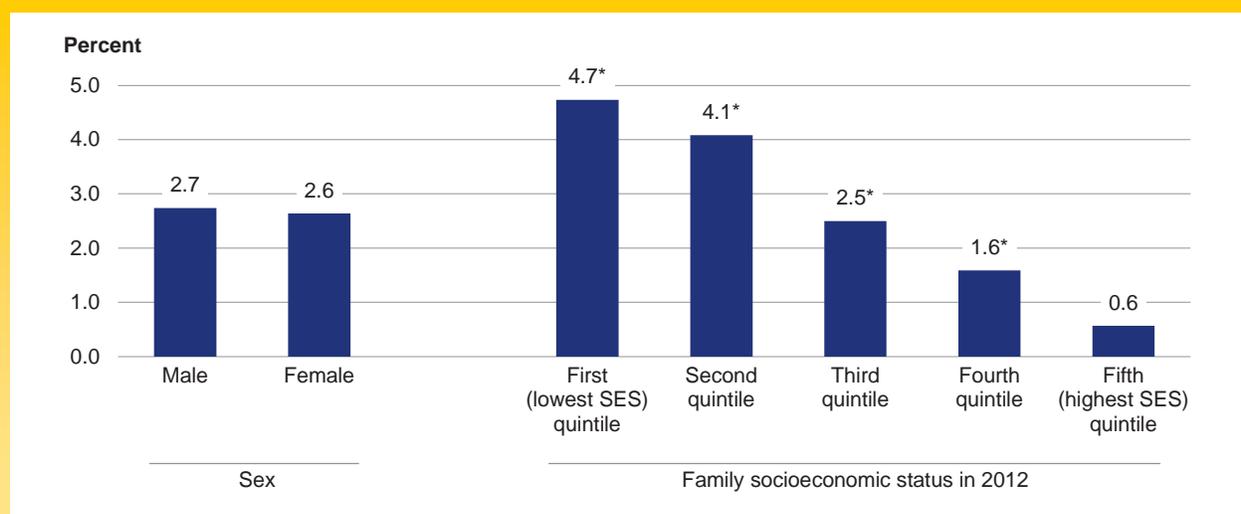
Endnotes

[1] *The First Look* report for HSLS:09 (NCES 2014-360) also reported estimates on dropouts which are slightly different from those reported in this *DataPoint* because the *First Look* report did not include ninth-grade dropouts.

[2] The race/ethnicity distribution of the population from which these dropout rates were calculated is 51.9 percent White, 13.7 percent Black, 22.3 percent Hispanic, 3.6 percent Asian, and 8.4 percent Other (Ingels, S.J., and Dalton, B. (2013). *High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) First Follow-up: A First Look at Fall 2009 Ninth-Graders in 2012* (NCES 2014-360).

[3] See figure note for quintile definition.

FIGURE 2. Percentage of 2009 ninth-graders who dropped out of high school, by sex and socioeconomic status: 2012

NOTE: Dropouts are students who were not enrolled in school and had not completed high school or an alternative program as of the 2012 interview. Socioeconomic status (SES) is an index score of the family's relative social position based on parents' education, occupational prestige, and family income. Here, SES is reported in quintiles (fifths) by dividing the weighted SES index score distribution into five equal groups. The first quintile is the lowest one-fifth of the SES distribution and fifth quintile is the highest. Estimates with * are significantly different from the estimate for the highest SES quintile. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Standard error tables are available at http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2015066.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. *High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) First Follow-up Public-Use Data File* (NCES 2014-358).

Why Students Drop Out of High School
Comparisons from Three National surveys
by Susan Rotermund

California Dropout Research Report (May 2007)
(http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/statisticalbrief-2.pdf)

Research has shown that students who drop out of school do so for a variety of reasons. This statistical brief uses student survey data from three national studies to explore the issue from the perspective of the dropout themselves. Students who took part in these surveys were asked to indicate the factors that contributed to their decision to leave school.

Table 1
TOP TEN REASONS 10th GRADERS DROPPED OUT: 2002-2004(%)
Sorted by National (N=663)

	National	California
1 Missed too many school days	44	46
2 Thought it would be easier to get GED	41	23
3 Getting poor grades/failing school	38	42
4 Did not like school	37	19
5 Could not keep up with schoolwork	32	35
6 Got a job	28	38
7 Was pregnant	28	22
8 Thought couldn't complete course requirements	26	24
9 Could not get along with teachers	25	23
10 Could not work at same time	22	22

Females Only
Source: Education Longitudinal Study, 2002 (ELS:2002)

Table 2
TOP FIVE REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT: AGES 16-25 (%)
Statistics from The Silent Epidemic (N-456)

	National
1 Classes were not interesting	47
2 Missed too many school days	43
3 Spent time with people not interested in school	42
4 Too much freedom/not enough rules in life	38
5 Was failing School	35

Source: Bridegeland, J., Dilulio, J. & Morison, D. (2006). *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts.* Washington DC: Civic Enterprises

Figure 1

Comparison of Reasons 10th Graders Dropped Out:
National and California, 1990 and 2002

Source 1990 data: National Education Longitudinal Study, 1998 (NELS:88)
N = 989

Source 2002 data: Education Longitudinal Study, 2002 (ELS:2002)
N = 663

8

A Major Concern

Young adults who leave school short of high school graduation face a number of potential hardships. Past research has shown that, compared with high school graduates, relatively more dropouts are unemployed and those dropouts who do succeed in finding work earn less money than high school graduates. High school dropouts are also more likely to receive public assistance than high school graduates who do not go on to college. This increased reliance on public assistance is likely due, at least in part, to the fact that young women who drop out of school are more likely to have children at younger ages and more likely to be single parents.

Secondary schools in today's society are faced with the challenge of increasing curricular rigor to strengthen the knowledge base of high school graduates, while at the same time increasing the proportion of all students who successfully complete a high school program. Reform advocates call for more effort devoted to linking schooling to the future, with an emphasis placed on high school graduates as skilled learners with the ability to continue their education and skills acquisition in college, technical school, or work-based programs.

The pressures placed on the education system to turn out increasingly larger numbers of qualified lifelong learners have led to an increased interest in the role that alternative methods of high school completion may play in helping some students meet these goals. At this point, most students pursuing an alternative to a regular diploma take the General Educational Development (GED) tests, with the goal of earning a high school equivalency credential.

For more information visit: **http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/**

Federal Perspective of What Works

Interventions for Preventing High School Dropout

The high school dropout rate continues to be an issue of national concern. The current estimate of the percentage of children who do not complete high school at the end of a 13-year program of study (K-12) is approximately 11 percent of the entire high school population and can be as high as 28 percent among certain segments of the population. The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) review focuses on interventions in middle school, junior high school, or high school designed to increase high school completion, including techniques such as the use of incentives, counseling, or monitoring.

Key Definitions

Dropout Prevention Programs. Dropout prevention programs are interventions designed to increase high school completion rates. These interventions can include such techniques as the use of incentives, counseling, or monitoring as the prevention/intervention of choice.

Reduced Dropout Rate. The success of any program will be evaluated by comparing the rate of high school completion and diploma receipt among program participants to that of a comparison group. This report will distinguish between traditional outcomes of high school completion (for example, diploma receipt) and other student outcomes.

Review of What Works. For the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) review, the general target population includes students who attend middle school, junior high school, or high school. Although dropout prevention programs that address all students are included, subpopulations that are especially vulnerable are of particular interest: racial and ethnic minorities, second-language learners, high-poverty students, and low-achieving students. Whenever possible, findings are broken out by subpopulations (for example, urban settings, high poverty) when focused information on a particular population is reported in a study.

Dropping Out of High School:
Prevalence, Risk Factors, and Remediation Strategies

By Jeremy Burrus and Richard D. Roberts

Key Concepts

- *Dropping out* — To quit a course or school without achieving a diploma.

- *Dropout* — A student who fails to complete a school or college course.

- *Dropout factories* — Schools with very poor graduation rates.

- *Theory of Planned Behavior* — The Theory of Planned Behavior states that the best predictor of behavior is one's intention to perform that behavior. In turn, intentions are determined by attitudes (evaluation of the behavior), subjective norms (social pressure to perform the behavior), and perceived control (one's belief that he or she has the ability to perform the behavior).

As a reader of ETS's *R&D Connections*, you have doubtless graduated from high school and, more than likely, from college. But what if you had not? In what ways would your life be different? Such questions are of particular interest to us as scientists at ETS's Research and Development division and its Center for Academic and Workforce Readiness and Success.

To address the high school dropout problem, educational institutions must identify early on which students are likely to drop out. We are exploring the possibility of working with state boards of education on projects that identify students at risk of dropping out of high school. This is not only a problem for high schools, but also for colleges and universities. To that end, we have just embarked on a multiyear study to predict dropout rates at Northern Kentucky University. The work on dropouts whether in high school or college supports ETS's mission of advancing quality and equity in education.

A Bleak Prospect

High school dropouts earn $9,200 less per year on average than those who graduate. Over the course of their lifetimes, they will earn an average of $375,000 less than high school graduates, and roughly $1 million less than college graduates (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2007). This income gap has increased over recent years: median earnings of families of high school dropouts were nearly 30% lower in 2004 than they were in 1974 (Achieve, 2006). Furthermore, high school dropouts are three times more likely to be unemployed than college graduates. Chances are also much higher that they will be living in poverty compared to high school graduates (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006). Given these facts, it is not surprising that those with lower levels of education also tend to be less healthy (Lleras-Muney, 2005).

It is not only the individual that suffers economically from dropping out. Society also pays a price when students fail. Forty percent of 16- to 24-year-old dropouts received some form of government assistance in 2001. And it is estimated that each high school dropout who turns to drugs or crime costs the nation anywhere from $1.7 million to

Editor's note: *Jeremy Burrus is a research scientist in the Research & Development division, where Richard D. Roberts is a managing principal research scientist. Burrus and Roberts both work at ETS's Center for Academic and Workforce Readiness and Success.*

"ETS can design assessments that predict which students are most at risk for dropping out. Researchers have identified several factors related to dropping out of school, and many of these factors can be identified early on in a student's school career."

$2.3 million dollars over his or her lifespan (Bridgeland, 2006). High school dropouts may — taken together — represent billions of dollars annually in lost revenue for the U.S. economy (Achieve, 2006; Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

As an educational assessment organization, ETS can design assessments that predict which students are most at risk for dropping out. Researchers have, as shown below, identified several factors related to dropping out of school, and many of these factors can be identified early on in a student's school career. ETS can support this field by providing reliable assessments that measure these factors, thus helping educators identify students in need of intervention while there is still time.

Changing Status Quo

It is our hope that our work will help change the dropout "status quo," but let us begin by reviewing the current state of affairs. How many young people drop out of high school? For 2009, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimates that 8.2% of all non-incarcerated 16- to 24-year olds in the United States were not enrolled in school and had yet to earn a high school degree (Aud et al., 2011). That adds up to about 3.17 million people. Furthermore, 40% of all incarcerated 16- to 24-year olds in the United States are high school dropouts, adding an additional 205,000 people to this population. This figure may need to be revised upwards as it does not include a group that NCES's research may not well represent — those whose immigration status is undocumented. If we add this group to the total, the number of 16- to 24-year-old dropouts will probably exceed 4 million at any one time. The average graduation rate by state is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Average freshman graduation rate for public high school students, by state or jurisdiction: School year 2007–08*

Source: U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics.

"Seventy percent of the participants in one study 'were confident that they could have graduated high school if they had stayed in school, and 66% said they would have worked harder if their teachers and parents had had higher expectations of them.'"

The dropout numbers for ethnic minorities are considerably higher. In 2009, the proportions of 16- to 24-year-old high school dropouts were 10.7% for African Americans, 15.9% for American Indians, and 17.9% for Hispanics. This problem is exacerbated in urban centers (Neild & Balfanz, 2006). Researchers estimate that as few as 50% of African-American, American Indian, and Hispanic students graduate from high school in some cities (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

These are dismal numbers, but we do have reasons to believe that they can be improved. Some of the most compelling reasons for hope come from the dropouts themselves. For instance, Bridgeland et al. (2006) conducted focus groups and face-to-face interviews of a diverse set of 467 dropouts aged 16 to 25 in 25 locations across the United States. Most interviewees believed that they had the ability to earn a high school degree: 70% said they were confident that they could have graduated high school if they had stayed in school, and 66% said they would have worked harder if their teachers and parents had had higher expectations of them. One should take care in interpreting these results, however, as this was not a nationally representative sample.

In addition, many respondents were aware of the importance of having a high school diploma. Eighty-one percent of the people interviewed said that getting a high school diploma was essential to their personal success. Furthermore, the great majority of dropouts regretted dropping out: 74% said they would have stayed in school if they could decide again. In addition, 76% of those who said they regretted their decision to drop out said that they would return to school if that option existed for students in their age group (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

These individuals are clearly not lost causes, and there is value in identifying students at risk of dropping out. If we can reach these students before they drop out and intervene to keep them in school, we can improve the future of both individual students and the nation as a whole.

The Dropout Process

Dropping out is a process that begins well before high school, and students exhibit identifiable warning signs at least one to three years before they drop out (e.g., Allensworth, 2005; Neild & Balfanz, 2006; Roderick, 1994; Rumberger, 2004). Furthermore, most students who drop out tend to do so relatively early in their high school careers. One recent study found that most students who dropped out of the Philadelphia public schools did so by the end of the 10th grade (Neild & Balfanz, 2006). Although students in Pennsylvania do not have the legal right to drop out until they are 17 years old, these students are referred to as "undercredited," meaning that they have successfully completed relatively few courses compared to the number of years they have spent in school. This means that they have dropped out for all practical purposes even though they are not legally allowed to do it at that age. Furthermore, 70% of Philadelphia students classified as "near dropouts," or students who attend class less than 50% of the time, were in the ninth or 10th grade. These students had a 45% chance of dropping out if they had reached ninth grade, a 34% chance if they had reached tenth grade, a 23% chance if they had reached eleventh grade, and a 16% chance if they had reached twelfth grade (Neild & Balfanz, 2006).

"Dropping out is a process that begins well before high school, and students exhibit identifiable warning signs at least one to three years before they drop out (…) Furthermore, most students who drop out tend to do so relatively early in their high school careers."

What are some of the early warning signs that a student may drop out? Below we outline early indicators of student dropout risk. These include both demographic and performance indicators. Later we outline some psychosocial factors — factors related to personality and motivation — found to be associated with dropping out of high school. Table 1 displays a summary of these factors.

Predictors of Dropout Risk: Early Warning Indicators

Students at risk for dropping out display certain easily identifiable characteristics, some of which are demographic and some of which are related to their performance in school.

Table 1: *Factors associated with dropping out of high school*

Demographic Characteristics	Performance Characteristics
Comes from low-income family	Lack of credits earned
Male	Poor attendance
Members of racial or ethnic minority group	Poor grades (especially in core courses)
Older than the average student in their grade	

Self-Identified Factors About Self	Self-Identified Factors About Others
Class not interesting	Adults did not expect them to perform in school
Lack of engagement with school	Parents not involved in education
Tests too difficult	Teachers did not seem interested in school
Poor attendance	

Demographics. Demographic indicators of at-risk students include the following (Allensworth, 2005; Roderick, 1994; Rumberger, 2004):

- Coming from a low-income family
- Being a member of a racial or ethnic minority group
- Being older than the average student in one's grade
- Being male

Performance. Researchers have found performance indicators that can identify students at risk of dropping out as early as eighth grade with a high degree of certainty. The previously mentioned study of Philadelphia's public schools found each of the following factors measured in eighth graders to predict dropping out: low attendance, poor grades in core courses, and being overage for one's grade (Neild & Balfanz, 2006).

An eighth grade student had at least a 75% chance of dropping out if he or she:

a) attended school less than 80% of the time in eighth grade, and
b) failed mathematics and/or English during the eighth grade.

This research categorized ninth grade students as "at risk" if they:

a) attended school less than 70% of the time in ninth grade,

b) earned fewer than two credits during the ninth grade, and

c) were not promoted to the 10th grade on time.

Overall, 80% of eighth and ninth grade students who were categorized as "at risk" eventually dropped out of high school.

Other studies have found similar results. For example, in a study of students in Chicago's public schools, Allensworth (2005) created an indicator variable to designate whether ninth-grade students were "on track" to graduate. Students were classified as not "on track" if they had low numbers on at least two of the following risk factors: attendance, grade point average, credits earned, and individual grades. This method of classifying the students in Chicago's public school system was 85% accurate in predicting high school graduation (Allensworth, 2005).

Another example comes from an investigation of a small school district in Massachusetts, where students with the largest drop in performance during the transition from elementary school to middle school, and from middle school to high school, were most likely to drop out (Roderick, 1994). This result further reinforces the conclusion of the study of Philadelphia students that students at risk for dropping out can be identified at, or prior to, the beginning of high school.

Predictors of Dropout Risk: Psychosocial Factors

Other predictors of dropping out of high school may be characterized as psychosocial factors, or factors related to personality and motivation. For example, it is possible to use the extent to which students — and their parents and teachers — actively engage in the educational process to predict how likely the students are to graduate. Engagement is multifaceted and includes the level of identification with the school and the development of positive relationships with peers and teachers. Forty-seven percent of participants in the Bridgeland et al. (2006) focus-group study said that they did not find school interesting, and that this was a factor in their decision to drop out. Such lack of engagement may not be limited to the students. Many of them doubted that their teachers were interested in school or student learning, and felt that they were more concerned with completing their workday than teaching class.

This lack of adult engagement is a recurring theme in research done by Bridgeland et al. In a 2006 study, 69% of the dropouts claimed that adults did not expect them to perform well, and that these low expectations contributed to their decision to drop out. Moreover, these students' feelings seem to be accurate. In a follow-up study that involved interviews with teachers, Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Balfanz (2009) found that only 32% of surveyed high school teachers agreed with the statement, "We should expect all students to meet high academic standards and provide extra support to struggling students to help them meet those standards" (p. 22). Empirical research has in fact demonstrated that teacher expectations do indeed affect both grades and students' likelihood of dropping out (Kaufman, Bradbury, & Owings, 1992).

"In a 2006 study, 69% of the dropouts claimed that adults did not expect them to perform well, and that these low expectations contributed to their decision to drop out."

Many participants in the Bridgeland et al. study (2006) also said that they felt insufficiently challenged by their teachers and that classes were not motivating. Most participants in the survey responded that expectations to complete homework were very low: 80% said they completed one hour or less per day, while 26% said they completed no homework. Higher parent and teacher expectations could have increased the likelihood that they would have graduated. As stated earlier, 66% of participants claimed that they would have worked harder in high school if more had been asked of them. Research does however suggest that few teachers would have done that. In the Bridgeland et al. (2009) follow-up study, 76% of the teachers placed most of the responsibility for the dropout problem on the students; only 13% said that teachers were responsible.

Parental involvement in a student's education plays an important role for his or her success in school (White & Kelly, 2010). Several dropouts in the Bridgeland et al. (2006) study indicated that their parents were not engaged in their education, or had become involved too late to make a difference. Twenty-one percent of the participants said that their parents were "not at all aware" and 51% of participants said that their parents were "just somewhat aware" of their school attendance and grades. Furthermore, 28% said that their parents were "not at all aware" that the student was on the verge of dropping out, and 50% of participants said that their parents were "just somewhat aware" of this fact (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

We see a need for more study of attitudes as a psychosocial factor that predicts drop out. Specifically, the *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)* — a psychological theory that includes the role of attitudes — holds promise in predicting drop out. Briefly, the theory says that intentions are the best predictor of behavior and that intentions are predicted by:

- *Attitudes*, meaning a person's evaluation of his or her own behavior or of others' behaviors;

- *Subjective norms*, which refers to the social pressure one feels to perform the behavior; and

- *Perceived control*, meaning a person's perception of his or her own capability to perform the behavior.

Thus far, only one study has used this theory to predict high school drop out, and it did so with great success (Davis, Ajzen, Saunders, & Williams, 2002). In this study, inner-city high school sophomores completed a short questionnaire that assessed each of the components of the TPB. The authors then predicted whether the students would graduate from high school three years later. Results revealed that the participants' responses as sophomores significantly predicted whether they eventually graduated or dropped out.

"Dropout Factories"

There is a subgroup of high schools in the United States where the annual graduation level is at best 50% (Balfanz & Letgers, 2004), making them de facto "dropout factories." About 15% of all high schools in the United States belong to this category, and half of all

> *"The higher the percentage of a school's students living in poverty, the higher the dropout rate. Poverty seems to be one of the strongest, if not the strongest, predictor of a school's dropout rate."*

dropouts in the country are "produced" by these schools. A very large portion of all minority student dropouts come from such dropout factories; about 50% of the African-American and 40% of the Hispanic students in the United States attend them. Most of these schools are located in the country's largest cities, or in the rural south and southwest.

What do these schools have in common?

Poverty.

Balfanz and Letgers found a strong relationship between poverty and the dropout rate: The higher the percentage of a school's students living in poverty, the higher the dropout rate. Poverty seems to be one of the strongest, if not the strongest, predictor of a school's dropout rate. This is underscored by the fact that minority students graduate at the same rate as white students when attending schools in low-poverty areas.

Can We Reduce the Dropout Rate?

The research discussed here on predicting high school dropouts would be nearly inconsequential unless something could be done about it. Fortunately, we see reason for optimism that graduation rates can indeed be improved. But two things are needed for this change to happen.

1. To keep students from dropping out, we need to know which students are most at risk. It should be clear by now that we have the ability to identify the students who are most likely to drop out. We can also identify high schools with extremely high dropout rates. This means that we can intervene both at the individual student level, and at the school or district level.

2. We need effective intervention programs. Many dropout intervention programs have been developed, but we do not know which of them would have the best effect on dropout rates. Some do hold promise, however. The What Works Clearinghouse at the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) evaluates educational interventions, and it has evaluated 28 dropout prevention programs. Given space limitations, we will not discuss individual intervention programs, but invite interested readers to learn more about these programs by visiting the IES website.[1] Of the 28 dropout prevention programs described on the IES website, 13 have demonstrated some "evidence of positive or potentially positive effects for at least one improvement outcome," meaning that they have demonstrated some effectiveness in helping students to stay in school or show improvement in school. Of these 13, however, only five have demonstrated "potentially positive" effects in helping students to complete school. This is not to say that the other eight programs do not help students to complete school; however, there is no evidence to date that they do. The main point is that, although some programs appear promising, more research is needed. Clearly, though, some programs seem to be on the right track.

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[1] **http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/topicarea.aspx?tid=06**

Concluding Comments

There is no denying that student dropout rates are a major social and economic problem in the United States. Too many students leave high school without graduating. This is costly not only for the individual, but also for the entire society.

The narrative surrounding the dropout problem is often one of doom and gloom, but we would like to finish by offering a more positive perspective. While it is clear that the United States desperately needs to improve high school graduation rates, it is a possible task if our citizens and policymakers demonstrate the will to do it. We do know how to identify the great majority of students on track to drop out, and we can identify the schools that are most likely to produce dropouts. In addition, researchers and educators are developing promising interventions that can help these students.

The good news is that we as a nation can ameliorate the dropout problem, if only we can mobilize the necessary resolve.

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II. *Strategic Empirical Research Related to Dropout Prevention*

- **Examining the Impact of Policy & Practice**

- **Dropout Prevention: Do Districts Pursue Best Practices?**

II. Strategic Empirical Research Related to Dropout Prevention

Examining the Impact of Policy & Practice

Examining the Impact of Policy and Practice Interventions on High School
Dropout and School Completion Rates: A Systematic Review of the Literature.
J. Freeman & B. Simonsen (2015), *Review of Educational Research, 85*, 205-248.
http://rer.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/10/13/0034654314554431.abstract

Abstract

The purpose of this literature review is to systematically examine policy and
practice intervention research and assess the impact of those interventions on high
school dropout and school completion rates. This systematic review extends the
literature by (a) describing both policy and practice interventions, (b) synthesizing
findings from experimental or quasi-experimental research, and (c) examining the
common elements of effective interventions. Specifically, this review addresses
two main questions. First, what are the characteristics of the empirical literature
examining high school dropout or school completion interventions? Second, what
are the common elements of effective policy or practice interventions for reducing
high school dropout rates or increasing school completion rates? Findings indicate
that despite research highlighting the need to address multiple risk factors and the
need for early intervention, the bulk of current empirical research is focused on
single-component, individual, or small group interventions delivered at the high
school level. Further research is needed to provide guidance to schools regarding
the integration of dropout efforts with other school initiatives. Multitiered
frameworks of support are suggested as a structure for accomplishing this
effectively and efficiently.

Dropout Prevention:
Do Districts Pursue Best Practice Recommendations?

Abstract

This report focuses on the reality that the dropout situation is unlikely to improve as long as policy and practice fail to ensure students have a comprehensive system of student and learning supports. To highlight the intervention problem, the emphasis is on first comparing federal practice guidance recommendations for addressing the dropout problem with data about what schools are doing; then, we stress the need to embed dropout prevention into development of a unified and comprehensive component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students at every school.

Dropout Prevention:
Do Districts Pursue Best Practice Recommendations?

Available evidence suggests that more than half a million young people drop out of high school each year, and the rate at which they drop out has remained about the same for the last 30 years (Dynarski, Clarke, Cobb, Finn, Rumberger, & Smink, 2008). A 2011 report indicates that the averaged freshman graduation rate in 2008-09 was 63.5 percent for Black students, 64.8 percent for American Indian/Alaska Native students, 65.9 percent for Hispanic students, compared to 82.0 percent for White students and 91.8 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander students (Stillwell, Sable, & Plotts, 2011).

As Gary Orfield, director of the Civil Rights project has stressed:

> There is a high school dropout crisis far beyond the imagination of most Americans, concentrated in urban schools and relegating many thousands of minority children to a life of failure. ... Only half of our nation's minority students graduate from high school along with their peers. For many groups – Latino, black, or Native American males-graduation rates are even lower. ... this [is an] educational and civil rights crisis.

In terms of economics, social programs, and public health, Russell Rumberger has pointed out that the U.S.A. loses over \$192 billion in income and tax revenues for each cohort of students who never complete high school. Relatedly, Dynarski and colleagues (2008) emphasize:

> Dropouts contribute only about half as much in taxes.... They draw larger government subsidies in the form of food stamps, housing assistance, and welfare payments. They have a dramatically increased chance of landing in prison, and they have worse health outcomes and lower life expectancies.

The purpose of this report is not to rehash these data. Our focus is on the reality that the dropout situation is unlikely to improve as long as policy and practice fail to ensure students have a comprehensive system of student and learning supports. To highlight the intervention problem, the emphasis is on first comparing federal practice guidance recommendations for addressing the dropout problem with data about what schools are doing; then, we stress the need to embed dropout prevention into development of a unified and comprehensive component for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students at every school.

Recommendations from the *What Works Clearinghouse*

In 2008, the U. S. Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse* provided a practice guide on *Dropout Prevention* (Dynarski, Clarke, Cobb, Finn, Rumberger, & Smink, 2008). The guide is based on the review of evidence based interventions and provides a level of evidence for each of six intervention recommendations.

Recognizing that individual strategies can only help a relatively few students, the guide's authors stress that "the greatest success

in reducing dropout rates will be achieved where multiple approaches are adopted as part of a comprehensive strategy to increase student engagement." They also emphasize that

> "increasing student engagement is critical to preventing dropping out. ... Engagement includes both behavioral and psychological components. Attendance, class participation, effort in doing schoolwork, and avoidance of disciplinary actions (notably suspensions) are behavioral indicators of engagement, while interest and enthusiasm, a sense of belonging, and identification with the school constitutes psychological engagement. Both aspects of engagement have been associated with dropping out of school Attendance in school activities and feeling a sense of belonging in the school community are both critical components of school engagement and should be addressed as part of dropout prevention or intervention strategies."

> "Engagement involves active participation in learning and schoolwork as well as in the social life of school. While dropping out typically occurs during high school, the disengagement process may begin much earlier and include academic, social, and behavioral components. The trajectory of a young person progressing in school begins in elementary grades, where students establish an interest in school and the academic and behavioral skills necessary to successfully proceed.
>   During the middle school years, students' interest in school and academic skills may begin to lag, so that by ... high school, students ... may need intensive individual support or other supports to re-engage them.... Educators and policymakers need to consider how to implement intermediate strategies aimed at increasing student engagement."

From this perspective, they offer recommendations related to the following three areas for practice:

- diagnostic processes for identifying student-level and school-wide dropout problems

- targeted interventions for a subset of middle and high school students who are identified as at risk of dropping out

- school-wide reforms designed to enhance for all students and prevent dropout more generally

With respect to "diagnostic processes", the recommendation focuses on identifying the magnitude of the problems and the specific students at risk of dropping out:

> *Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out. States, districts and schools should develop comprehensive, longitudinal, student level databases with unique IDs that, at a minimum, include data on students absences, grade retention, and low academic achievement. Data should be reviewed regularly with a particular emphasis before the transitions to middle school and high school.*

Three complementary recommendations focus on "targeting students who are the most at risk of dropping out by intensively intervening in their academic, social, and personal lives. ... Successful identification can permit the implementation of intensive targeted interventions." The panel suggests using them together.

> *Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out. Adult advocates should have an appropriate back ground and low caseloads, and be purposefully matched with students. Adequate training and support should be provided for advocates.*

> *Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance. Help students to improve academic performance and re-engage in school. This should be implemented in conjunction with other recommendations.*

> *Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills. Students should establish attainable academic and behavioral goals and be recognized when they accomplish them. Schools can teach strategies*

Two recommendations emphasize the need for "comprehensive, school-wide reform strategies aimed at increasing engagement of all students in school. These might be adopted in schools with unusually high dropout rates, where a large proportion of the student population is at risk. These recommendations recognize the fact that dropping out is not always or entirely a function of the attitudes, behaviors, and external environment of the students— that dysfunctional schools can encourage dropping out." They

stress that when the school is part of the problem, the following recommendations "propose ambitious efforts to change the environment, curriculum, and culture of the school."

> *Personalize the learning environment and instructional process. A personalized learning environment creates a sense of belonging and fosters a school climate where students and teachers get to know one another and can provide academic, social, and behavioral encouragement.*

> *Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school. Engagement can be increased by providing students with the necessary skills to complete high school and by introducing students to postsecondary options.*

What Districts Do About Dropouts

In September, 2011, the U. S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics released findings from a national survey of *Dropout Prevention Services and Programs in Public School Districts: 2010-11* (Carver & Lewis, 2011). For the survey, dropout prevention interventions were defined as "services and programs intended to increase the rate at which students are staying in school, progressing toward graduation, or earning a high school credential."

The self-report survey was designed for all types of districts (and was mailed to 1,200 public school districts), including those without high school grades; response rate was 91%. The structured instrument asked about specific services and programs that districts "may provide to students at various levels, including those in elementary and middle/junior high school, that are designed to support students who are struggling academically or who may be at future risk of dropping out."

The report states it "provides national data about how public school districts identify students at risk of dropping out, programs used specifically to address the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school, the use of mentors for at-risk students, and efforts to encourage dropouts to return to school." The authors caution:

> "Because this report is purely descriptive in nature, readers are cautioned not to make causal inferences about the data presented .... they are not meant to emphasize any particular issue. The findings are estimates of

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dropout prevention services and programs available in public school districts rather than estimates of students served. Percentages of districts and students do not have the same distributions. For example, although only 5 percent of public school districts in the United States are located in cities, about 31 percent of all students are enrolled in these districts."

An obvious further caution is that, as with any survey of public school interventions, the specifics asked are quite circumscribed. Moreover, despite the researchers' caveat, the data may well be interpreted by some as indicating not only that this is what schools are doing, but that it is what they should be doing.

To underscore how limited the survey data on dropout prevention are, we have used the reported findings to create the table on the following pages. The table groups interventions covered by the survey in terms of specific examples mentioned in the *What Works Clearinghouse* guide for dropout prevention.

A general comparison of the recommended practices with the items asked in the survey makes evident the narrowness of the instrument's focus. Particularly lost is the emphasis on approaches that embed dropout prevention into comprehensive, school-wide improvements and reforms.

Thus, while the report's findings describe some of what districts are doing to address the dropout problem, there are many other relevant interventions districts undoubtedly are pursuing for which data are not yet reported. As a result, even the descriptive value of the data reported is highly circumscribed and has little to say about what schools need to do.

Given the continuing intractability of the dropout problem, schools clearly need to do much more than the survey indicates they are doing. The federal practice guide certainly emphasizes that point and stresses the need to build on strategies and practices that have demonstrated promise in reducing dropout rates. Our analyses of what schools do and are not doing suggest that moving forward requires embedding the best of dropout prevention efforts into the development of a comprehensive system of student and learning supports that is fully integrated into school improvement policy and practice.

Table
Some Findings from *Dropout Prevention Services and Programs in Public School Districts: 2010-11*: A Report from the U. S. Department of Education

Reporting Districts indicated the following:

(1) Schoolwide Interventions

>Transition Supports (e.g., from middle school to high school)

What was offered all students in at least one school	Percentage of schools middle schools	high schools
• an assigned student mentor	10%	20%
• an assigned adult mentor	17%	26%
• an advisement class	24%	40%

>Addressing Behavior Problems Using a Formal Program Schoolwide

69% Elementary schools   61% middle schools   49% high schools

(2) Identifying the Magnitude of the Problem and Identifying Specific Students at Risk of Dropping Out

Factors Extensively Used in Identifying Students	Percentage of schools
• academic failure	76%
• truancy or excessive absences	64%
• behaviors that warrant suspension or expulsion	45%

(3) Targeted Interventions to Provide Support for Identified Students

What was offered for targeted students	elementary	Percentage of schools middle schools	high schools
• tutoring	75%	79%	84%
• summer school	54%	58%	67%
• remediation classes	61%	69%	79%
• guided study hall/ academic support	36%	63%	70%
• alternative schools/programs	20%	44%	76%
• after-school programs	42%	45%	45%

(4) Providing Information to Receiving Schools about the unique needs of transitioning at-risk students

>84% of districts reported doing so

Table (cont.)

(5) Educational Options for High School Students at Risk of Dropping Out

What was offered	Percentage of schools
• Credit recovery courses	88%
• smaller class size	72%
• early graduation options	63%
• self-paced courses other than credit recovery	55%

Of districts with career and technical *high schools*:
>15% reported that most at risk students participate
>75% reported some at risk students participate.

Of districts with career and technical *courses at a regular high school*:
>26% reported that most at-risk students participate
>66% report that some at-risk students participate.

(6) Use of "Mentors" Specifically to Address Needs of Students at Risk of Dropping Out

What was offered for targeted students	Percentage of schools		
	elementary	middle schools	high schools
• student mentors	25%	28%	39%
• school counselors, teachers, or school administrators to formally mentor	60%	66%	77%
• adult mentors employed by the district	6%	9%	12%
• community volunteers	35%	30%	30%

(7) Worked with Community to Address the Needs of Students at Risk of Dropping out

Which Resource	Percentage of schools
• child protective services	85%
• community mental health agency	73%
• state or local government agency providing financial assistance to needy families	68%
• Churches of community organizations	54%
• health clinic or hospital	50%

Moving Forward

We begin by affirming that it is a given that a strong academic program is the foundation from which all other school interventions must operate. Clearly, the base for equity is effective personalized instruction (e.g., instructional approaches that account for both individual and group interests, strengths, and weaknesses). However, if there is to be equity of opportunity with respect to public education, policy guidelines and practices also must meet the challenge of enabling learning by addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

While districts are doing a great deal to address the dropout problem dropout rates remain too high, especially in some districts. The *What Works Clearinghouse* recommendations are good as far as they go. However, the dropout problem cannot and should not be treated as separate from the many other problems schools must address to ensure equity of opportunity for all students. These problems include concerns about increasing attendance, reducing behavior problems, enhancing safety, closing the achievement gap, and on and on. Moreover, it should be clear to everyone that schools with the most dropouts are the ones most in need of a school improvement process that addresses all these matters with a comprehensive and unified system.

Analyses of school improvement policies, plans, and practices substantiate that the trend is for districts and their schools to attempt to address each problem as a separate initiative (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008; 2011a; 2011b). The picture that emerges is one of ad hoc, fragmented, and flawed policies and practices. This has led to proposals to coordinate the many fragmented programs and services. However, as our analyses have stressed, fragmentation tends to reflect the problem that student and learning support initiatives are marginalized in school improvement policy and practice (Adelman & Taylor, 2000, 2008, 2009, 2011a, b).

The policy need is to end the marginalization; the practice need is to develop a unified and comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. From both a policy and practice perspective, this involves embedding separate initiatives, such as those for preventing dropouts, bullying, and all others focused on learning, behavior, and emotional concerns, into a comprehensive component for student and learning supports.

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THE CHALLENGE

- Every school has a wide range of learners and must ensure equity of opportunity for *all* students and not just a few.

- External and internal barriers to learning and teaching interfere with schools achieving their mission.

- For the many students in need, school districts must design and implement learning support systems that are comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive, and institutionalize them at every school.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

- Learning support systems must address barriers to learning and teaching and ensure that students are engaged and re-engaged in classroom learning. Such systems must reflect the best available science, with a special emphasis on intrinsic motivation theory and practices. A key facet of this not only involves engaging students from the point at which they enter but, after a few years of schooling, also requires a strong emphasis on re-engaging those who have actively disengaged from learning what schools are trying to teach them. Re-engagement that is productive of learning is not about increasing social control, it is about promoting intrinsic motivation (see the relevant references at the end of this article).

- In order to meet the goal of all children learning to high standards or reaching proficiency, the system of learning supports must be fully integrated with instruction.

- Developing a comprehensive system of learning supports requires weaving together the resources of school, home, and community. This involves an operational infrastructure that ensures the learning supports system is treated as primary and essential in planning school improvement.

- Equity requires developing a comprehensive system of learning supports in every school in a district.

- Engagement and re-engagement at school (for students, staff, parents, and other stakeholders) requires empowerment of all and use of processes that equalize power and ensure equity and fairness in decision making. Equalizing power among stakeholders involves contractual agreements, and considerable capacity building.

- Engagement and re-engagement at school requires moving beyond an overemphasis on behavior modification to practices based on a deep understanding of intrinsic motivation (see Appendix).

As Judy Jeffrey, then chief state school officer for Iowa, stressed in introducing Iowa's design for a comprehensive system of supports:

> "Through our collective efforts, we must meet the learning needs of all students. Not every student comes to school motivationally ready and able to learn. Some experience barriers that interfere with their ability to profit from classroom instruction. Supports are needed to remove, or at least to alleviate, the effects of these barriers. Each student is entitled to receive the supports needed to ensure that he or she has an equal opportunity to learn and to succeed in school. This [design] provides guidance for a new direction for student support that brings together the efforts of schools, families, and communities.
>
> If every student in every school and community in Iowa is to achieve at high levels, we must rethink how student supports are organized and delivered to address barriers to learning. This will require that schools and school districts, in collaboration with their community partners, develop a comprehensive, cohesive approach to delivery of learning supports that is an integral part of their school improvement efforts" (Iowa Department of Education, 2004).

Moving to a Three Component Framework for Improvement Policy

Policy analyses indicate school improvement initiatives are dominated by a two component framework. That is, the main thrust is on improving (1) instruction and (2) governance/management. Where there are student support programs and services, they are marginalized and pursued in piecemeal and fragmented ways. School improvement policy has paid little or no attention to rethinking these learning supports. Continuing this state of affairs works against ensuring *all* students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Policy for improving schools needs to shift from a two- to a three-component framework. The third component encompasses student and learning supports designed to address barriers to learning and teaching, including re-engagement of disconnected students. This third component becomes the unifying concept and umbrella under which all resources currently expended for student and learning supports are woven together. Its adoption represents a paradigm shift in school improvement policy – from a *marginalized and fragmented* set of student support *services* to development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive *system* that enables students to benefit from improved instruction.

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As with the other two components, such an enabling or learning supports system must be treated in policy and practice as primary and essential in order to combat the marginalization and fragmentation of the work. Furthermore, to be effective it must be fully integrated with the other two components. Properly conceived, the component provides a blueprint and roadmap for transforming the many pieces into a comprehensive and cohesive system at all levels and in no way detracts from the fact that a strong academic program is the foundation from which all other school-based interventions must flow. Indeed, an enabling or learning supports component provides an *essential* systemic way to address factors that interfere with academic performance and achievement.

Many places are referring to third component elements as *learning supports*. And increasingly, learning supports are being defined as the resources, strategies, and practices that provide physical, social, emotional, and intellectual supports intended to *enable* all pupils to have an equal opportunity for success at school. Whatever the component is called, it is a transformational concept.

Our prototype framework operationalizes the component as a system that encompasses three *integrated subsystems* and six arenas for *organizing content*. The subsystems stress

- promoting healthy development and preventing problems

- responding as early after problem onset as is feasible

- providing for those whose serious, pervasive, and chronic problems require more intensive assistance and accommodation.

The six arenas for organizing content emphasize enhancing supports within the classroom and extending beyond the classroom to include school and community resources. Specifically, the focus is on:

- enhancing the ability of the classroom teacher and others to facilitate learning through prevention and intervention as early after problem onset as feasible

- increasing home involvement and engagement in schools and schooling (a critical and too often underdeveloped arena in addressing the dropout and a variety of other problems)

- providing support for the many transitions experienced by students and their families

- expanding community involvement and engagement through volunteers, businesses, agencies, faith-based organizations, etc.

- responding to and preventing crises, violence, bullying, substance abuse, etc.

- providing specialized student and family assistance when necessary.

The above elements are essential to a school's ability to accomplish its instructional mission; they do not represent an agenda separate from that mission. Moreover, the emphasis on classroom, school, home, and neighborhood helps create a school-wide culture of caring and nurturing. In turn, this helps students, families, staff, and the community at large feel a school is a welcoming, supportive place that accommodates diversity, prevents problems, and enhances youngsters' strengths and is committed to assuring equal opportunity for all students to succeed at school.

In operationalizing the third component, the focus is on weaving together what schools at all levels already are doing and enhancing the effort by inviting in home and community resources to help fill high priority systemic gaps related to (1) the *continuum* of interconnected systems of interventions and (2) the multifaceted set of *content arenas* that are cohesively integrated into classrooms and school-wide interventions. And, of course, the third component must be fully integrated with the instructional and management components in school improvement policy and practice.

Comprehensiveness = More than Coordination & Much More than Enhancing Availability and Access to Health and Social Services

Too often, what is being identified as *comprehensive* is not comprehensive enough, and generally the approach described is not about *developing a system* of supports but only about enhancing coordination of fragmented efforts. Many times the main emphasis is on health and social services, usually with the notion of *connecting* more community services to schools. In some instances, the focus expands to include a variety of piecemeal programs for safe and drug free schools, family assistance, after-school and summer programs, and so forth. All these programs and services are relevant. But, most proposals to improve supports still fail to escape old ways of thinking about what schools need to develop a comprehensive system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching. The need is to reframe services and integrate them and other piecemeal and ad hoc initiatives for addressing barriers to learning, development, and teaching.

The tangential solution to the widespread fragmentation continues to be a call for improving coordination, communication, and coherence and flexibility in use of resources. While these are important attributes in improving student and learning supports, this emphasis stops short of establishing the type of expanded school improvement policy and practice needed to develop and fully integrate a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.

Concluding Comments

Do schools pursue best practices? Certainly, the intent is there. No one argues against using the best science available to improve schools. However, so much of what is offered as best practices for preventing dropouts, bullying, and other behavior, learning, and emotional problems stems from highly controlled research focused on specific types of problems. Moreover, it is well to remember that the term *best* simply denotes that a practice is better than whatever else is currently available. How *good* it is depends on complex analyses related to costs and benefits.

It is clear that schools need and want considerable help in improving outcomes for all students. It is also evident that the limited outcomes generated by many specific *best* practices for addressing barriers to learning and teaching have led to growing recognition of the need for a comprehensive and unified systemic approach to these concerns. And, while the lowest performing schools probably are most in need of developing such a system, it is evident that all high poverty, low performing schools and most other schools are expending significant resources on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students with too little payoff and accountability.

Unfortunately, student and learning supports often are poorly conceived and are designed in ways that meet the needs of relatively few students. In part, this is the product of two-component thinking. In this time of need and change, it is essential that policy makers move to a *three-component framework* for turning around, transforming, and continuously improving schools. The third component will provide a unifying concept and an umbrella under which districts and schools can weave together best practices for student and learning supports.

> Pioneering work is underway . We anticipate more and more movement in this direction at state, regional, district, and school levels (see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/trailblazing.htm).

The call for ensuring equity and opportunity for all students demands no less.

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Use the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Find on *Dropout Prevention* for more:
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/dropout.html

This resource contains links to key references, empirically supported programs, and centers specializing in the topic and related topics.

Other Quick Finds that may be helpful (see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/ click on Quick Find Search)

>Barriers to Learning   >Classroom Climate   >Classroom-focused Enabling
>Environments that Support Learning   >Learning Supports: Students to Succeed
>Mentoring   >Motivation   >Parent/Home Involvement
>Parenting Skills and Parenting Education >Prevention for Students "At Risk"
>Resilience/Protective Factors   >Social Promotion

For more on all this, see the *About New Directions for Student Support* online at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ndannouncement.htm

Additional references and information on dropouts can be found on such websites as:

National Dropout Prevention Centers – http://www.dropoutprevention.org/
High School Graduation Initiative also known as School Dropout Prevention Program –
http://www.ed.gov/programs/dropout/index.html

Appendix

Motivation is a Primary Concern in Addressing All Students

Getting students involved in their education programs is more than having them participate; it is connecting students with their education, enabling them to influence and affect the program and, indeed, enabling them to become enwrapped and engrossed in their educational experiences.

Wehmeyer & Sands (1998)

Most students who dropout have manifested a range of learning, behavior, and emotional concerns. Whatever the initial cause of these problems, the longer the individual has lived with them, the more likely s/he will have negative feelings and thoughts about instruction, teachers, and schools. The feelings include anxiety, fear, frustration, and anger. The thoughts may include strong expectations of failure and vulnerability and assignment of a low value to many learning "opportunities." Such thoughts and feelings can result in low and often avoidance motivation for learning and performing in many areas of schooling.

Low motivation leads to half-hearted effort. Avoidance motivation leads to avoidance behaviors. Individuals with avoidance and low motivation often also are attracted to socially disapproved activity. Poor effort, avoidance behavior, and active pursuit of disapproved behavior on the part of students become cyclical and are sure-fire recipes for failure and worse.

Early in the cycle it is tempting to focus directly on student misbehavior. And, it also is tempting to think that behavior problems at least can be exorcized by "laying down the law." We have seen many administrators pursue this line of thinking. For every student who "shapes up," ten others experience a Greek tragedy that inevitably ends in the student being pushed-out of school through a progression of suspensions, "opportunity" transfers, and expulsions. Official dropout figures don't tell the tale. What we see in most high schools in cities such as Los Angeles, Baltimore, D.C., Miami, and Detroit is that only about half or less of those who were enrolled in the ninth grade are still around to graduate from 12th grade.

Most of these students entered kindergarten with a healthy curiosity and a desire to learn to read and write. By the end of 2nd grade, we start seeing the first referrals by classroom teachers because of learning and behavior problems. From that point on, increasing numbers of students become disengaged from classroom learning, and most of these manifest some form of behavioral and emotional problems.

It is commonplace to find that when students are not engaged in the lessons at hand they tend to pursue other activity. Many individuals with learning problems also are described as hyperactive, distractible, impulsive, behavior disordered, and so forth. Their behavior patterns are seen as interfering with efforts to remedy their learning problems. As teachers and other staff try to cope with those who are disruptive, the main concern usually is "classroom management."

At one time, a heavy dose of punishment was the dominant approach. Currently, the stress is on more positive practices designed to provide "behavior support" in and out of the classroom. These include a focus on social skills training, asset development, character education, and positive behavior support initiatives.

It has been heartening to see the shift from punishment to positive behavior support in addressing unwanted behavior. However, until factors leading to disengagement are addressed, we risk perpetuating what William Ryan warns is a tendency to *blame the victim.*

<h2 style="color:red; text-align:center">It Begins with Personalized Instruction
and Key to this is Matching Motivation</h2>

For some time, efforts to improve learning in classrooms have revolved around the concepts of individualized or personalized instruction. The two concepts overlap in their emphasis on developmental differences. Indeed, the major thrust in most *individualized* approaches is to account for individual differences in developmental capability. *Personalization,* however, is defined as the process of accounting for individual differences in both capability and motivation.

For motivated learners, either individualized or personalized instruction can be quite effective in helping them attain their goals. Sometimes all that is needed is to provide the opportunity to learn. At other times, teaching facilitates learning by leading, guiding, stimulating, clarifying, and supporting. Both approaches require knowing when, how, and what to teach and when and how to structure the situation so students can learn on their own. However, for students for whom classroom learning is not going well, motivation is a primary consideration, and the concept of personalization provides the best guide to practice (and research).

Personalization needs to be understood as a psychological construct. From a motivational perspective, the *learner's perception* is a critical factor in defining whether the environment is a good fit. Matching motivation requires factoring in students' perceptions in determining the right mix of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. It also requires understanding the role played by expectations of outcome. This is fundamental to engaging (and re-engaging) students in classroom learning.

Given this, the key is ensuring learning opportunities are *perceived by learners* as good ways to reach their goals. And, therefore, a basic assessment concern is that of eliciting learners' perceptions of how well teaching and learning environments match both their interests and abilities. That is, at its core, personalized instruction is about attending as much to motivational differences as to differences in capabilities. Indeed, there are instances when the primary focus is on motivation. The implications for prevention and use of response to intervention strategies are obvious.

<h2 style="color:red; text-align:center">Re-engaging Students</h2>

<p style="text-align:center">All behavior-focused interventions must go a step farther and include
a focus on helping teachers re-engage students in classroom learning</p>

With respect to engagement in classroom learning, the first strategic step is to ensure a good motivational match. With respect to dropout prevention, this involves modifying classrooms to ensure a caring context for learning and instruction that is highly responsive to a wide range of learner differences in motivation and development. With all this in place, the next step involves providing special assistance as needed. This step calls for strategies that focus on addressing the needs of specific students and families.

Of particular concern is what teachers do when they encounter a student who has disengaged and is misbehaving. In most cases, the emphasis shouldn't be first and foremost on implementing social control techniques. What teachers need are strategies to re-engage those students who have disconnected and are resistant to standard instruction.

Although motivation is a long-standing concern at schools, the focus usually is on extrinsics, especially in managing behavior, but also in conjunction with direct skill instruction. For example, interventions are designed to improve impulse control, perseverance, selective attention, frustration tolerance, sustained attention and follow-through, and social awareness and skills. In all cases, the emphasis is on reducing or eliminating interfering behaviors, usually with the presumption that the student will then re-engage in learning. However, there is little evidence that these strategies enhance a student's motivation toward classroom learning (National Research Council, 2004).

Ironically, the reliance on extrinsics to control behavior may exacerbate student problems. Motivational research suggests that when people perceive their freedom (e.g., of choice) is threatened, they have a psychological reaction that motivates them to restore their sense of freedom. (For instance, when those in control say: *You can't do that ... you must do this ...,* the covert and sometimes overt psychological reaction of students often is: *Oh, you think so!*) This line of research also suggests that with prolonged denial of freedom, people's reactivity diminishes, they become amotivated, and usually feel helpless and ineffective.

Some General Strategic Considerations

Psychological research over the last fifty years has brought renewed attention to motivation as a central concept in understanding school problems. This work is just beginning to find its way into professional development programs. One line of work has emphasized the relationship of learning and behavior problems to deficiencies in *intrinsic* motivation. This work clarifies the value of interventions designed to increase

- feelings of self-determination

- feelings of competence and expectations of success

- feelings of interpersonal relatedness

- the range of interests and satisfactions related to learning.

Activities to correct deficiencies in intrinsic motivation are directed at improving awareness of personal motives and true capabilities, learning to set valued and appropriate goals, learning to value and to make appropriate and satisfying choices, and learning to value and accept responsibility for choice.

The point for emphasis here is that re-engaging students and maintaining their engagement in learning involves matching motivation. Matching motivation requires an appreciation of the importance of a student's perceptions in determining the right mix of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. It also requires understanding the central role played by expectations related to outcome. Without a good match, social control strategies can suppress negative attitudes and behaviors, but re-engagement in classroom learning is unlikely.

To clarify matters with respect to designing new directions for student support for disengaged students, below are four general strategies to think about. In each instance, families and others at home and in the neighborhood could play a significant role if they can be mobilized.

Clarifying student perceptions of the problem – It is desirable to create a situation where students can talk openly why they have become disengaged. This provides an invaluable basis for formulating a personalized plan for helping alter their negative perceptions and for planning ways to prevent others from developing such perceptions.

Reframing school learning – For disengaged students, major reframing in teaching approaches is required so that these students (a) view the teacher as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and (b) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable. It is important, for example, to eliminate threatening evaluative measures; reframe content and processes to clarify purpose in terms of real life needs and experiences and underscore how it all builds on previous learning; and clarify why the procedures are expected to be effective – especially those designed to help correct specific problems.

Renegotiating involvement in school learning – New and mutual agreements must be developed and evolved over time through conferences with the student and where appropriate including parents. The intent is to affect perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome. The focus throughout is on clarifying awareness of valued options, enhancing expectations of positive outcomes, and engaging the student in meaningful, ongoing decision making. For the process to be most effective, students should be assisted in sampling new processes and content, options should include valued enrichment opportunities, and there must be provision for reevaluating and modifying decisions as perceptions shift.

Reestablishing and maintaining an appropriate working relationship – This requires the type of ongoing interactions that creates a sense of trust, open communication, and provides personalized support and direction.

Options and Student Decision Making as Key Facets

To maintain re-engagement and prevent disengagement, the above strategies must be pursued using processes and content that:

- minimize threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to valued others

- maximize such feelings (included here is an emphasis on taking steps to enhance public perception that the school and classroom are welcoming, caring, safe, and just places)

- guide motivated practice (e.g., organize and clarify opportunities for meaningful application of learning)

- provide continuous information on learning and performance in ways that highlight accomplishments

- provide opportunities for continued application and generalization (e.g., ways in which students can pursue additional, self-directed learning or can arrange for more support and direction).

Obviously, it is no easy task to decrease well-assimilated negative attitudes and behaviors. And, the task is likely to become even harder with the escalation toward high-stakes testing policies (no matter how well-intentioned). It also seems obvious that, *for many schools, enhanced achievement test scores will only be feasible when a significant number of disengaged students are re-engaged in learning at school.*

All this argues for

- minimizing student disengagement and maximizing re-engagement by moving school culture toward a greater focus on intrinsic motivation and

- minimizing psychological reactance and enhancing perceptions that lead to re-engagement in learning at school by rethinking social control practices.

From a motivational perspective, key facets of accomplishing this involve enhancing student options and decision making.

A greater proportion of individuals with avoidance or low motivation for learning at school are found among those with learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems. For these individuals, few currently available options may be appealing. How much greater the range of options needs to be depends primarily on how strong avoidance tendencies are. In general, however, the initial strategies for working with such students involve

- further expansion of the range of options for learning (if necessary, this includes avoiding established curriculum content and processes)

- primarily emphasizing areas in which the student has made personal and active decisions

- accommodation of a wider range of behavior than usually is tolerated (e.g., a widening of limits on the amount and types of "differences" tolerated)

From a motivational perspective, one of the most basic concerns is the way in which students are involved in making decisions about options. Critically, decision-making processes can lead to perceptions of coercion and control or to perceptions of real choice (e.g., being in control of one's destiny, being self-determining). Such differences in perception can affect whether a student is mobilized to pursue or avoid planned learning activities and outcomes.

People who have the opportunity to make decisions among valued and feasible options tend to be committed to following through. In contrast, people who are not involved in decisions often have little commitment to what is decided. And if individuals disagree with a decision that affects them, besides not following through they may react with hostility.

Thus, essential to programs focusing on motivation are decision-making processes that affect perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome. Special concerns here are:

- Decisions are based on current perceptions. As perceptions shift, it is necessary to reevaluate decisions and modify them in ways that maintain a mobilized learner.

- Effective and efficient decision making is a basic skill, and one that is as fundamental

as the three Rs. Thus, if an individual does not do it well initially, this is not a reason to move away from learner involvement in decision making. Rather, it is an assessment of a need and a reason to use the process not only for motivational purposes, but to improve this basic skill.

• Remember that, among students manifesting learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems, the most fundamental decision often is whether they want to participate or not. That is why it may be necessary in specific cases temporarily to put aside established options and standards. As we have stressed, for some students the decision to participate in a proactive way depends on whether they perceive the learning environment as positively different – and quite a bit so – from the one in which they had so often experienced failure .

Reviews of the literature on human motivation suggest that providing students with options and involving them in decision making are key facets of addressing the problem of engagement in the classroom and at school (see references on the next page). For example, numerous studies have shown that opportunities to express preferences and make choices lead to greater motivation, academic gains, increases in productivity and on-task behavior, and decreases in aggressive behavior. Similarly, researchers report that student participation in goal setting leads to more positive outcomes (e.g., higher commitment to a goal and increased performance).

**If you didn't make so many rules,
there wouldn't be so many for me to break!**

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Also, available at not cost from the Center, see:

Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School – http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf

Re-engaging Students in Learning – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/quicktraining/reengagingstudents.pdf

Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Focused Enabling – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf

Parent and Home Involvement in Schools – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/parenthome/parent1.pdf

The Parable of the Policy Making Owl

A field-mouse was lost in a dense wood, unable to find his way out. He
came upon a wise old owl sitting in a tree.

"Please help me, wise old owl, how can I get out of this wood?"
said the field-mouse.

"Easy," said the owl, "Fly out, as I do."

"But how can I fly?" asked the mouse.

The owl looked at him haughtily, sniffed disdainfully, and said:
"Don't bother me with the details, I only decide the policy."

Moral: *Leadership involves providing details.*

###

Join the *District and State Collaborative Network for Developing Comprehensive Systems for Learning Support –*

> The network is for those interested in sharing prototypes, processes, and lessons learned related to pursuing new directions for student and learning supports. Our Center is facilitating the work of the collaborative. Sharing will be done through internet mechanisms (e.g., individual emails, listservs, websites), phone and possibly video or skype discussion sessions, and in person meetings as feasible. We anticipate that the Center's collaboration with the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and Scholastic will be helpful in achieving all this.
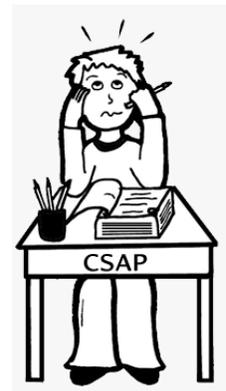
Contact" Linda Taylor: Ltaylor@ucla.edu or Howard Adelman: adelman@psych.ucla.edu

###

III.   *Dropout Prevention Programs*

- **What Works**

- **Effective Strategies**

- **Practice and Guidance Notes**

Each year school got harder and I got more behind-I went to school less and less so when I stopped going, hardly anyone noticed,

III. Dropout Prevention Programs

What Works

Dropout Prevention in Middle and High Schools: From Research to Practice.
J. Wilkins & L. Bost (2015). Intervention in School and *Clinic*, 1-9.
http://isc.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/10/03/1053451215606697.full.pdf+html

Abstract

Based on work with state and local education agencies in dropout prevention for students with disabilities, successful research-based interventions are described along with details of how these interventions have been implemented in middle and high schools across the country. The interventions that have helped students with disabilities graduate from school include early warning systems, mentoring programs, student engagement, family engagement, academic remediation and enrichment, career-focused curricula, interpersonal skills instruction, a focus on the transition to high school, and class/school restructuring initiatives.

III. Dropout Prevention Programs

What Works Clearinghouse

Dropout Prevention

http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=9

Summary

Geared toward educators, administrators, and policymakers, this guide provides recommendations that focus on reducing high school dropout rates. Strategies presented include identifying and advocating for at-risk students, implementing programs to improve behavior and social skills, and keeping students engaged in the school environment.

Practice Guide Details

Released:	August 2008
Topic:	Dropout Prevention
Education Level:	Middle Grades, High School
Audience:	Administrator, Policymaker, Researcher, Teacher

Recommendations

Diagnostic

Recommendation	Level of Evidence
1. *Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.* States, districts and schools should develop comprehensive, longitudinal, student level databases with unique IDs that, at a minimum, include data on student absences, grade retention, and low academic achievement. Data should be reviewed regularly, with a particular emphasis before the transitions to middle school and high school. *Source* – *(1.6 MB)*	Minimal

Panel

Mark Dynarski (Chair)
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Linda Clarke
City of Houston

Brian Cobb
Colorado State University

Jeremy Finn
State University of New York-Buffalo

Russell Rumberger
University of California-Santa Barbara

Jay Smink
National Dropout Prevention Center/Network

Targeted interventions

Recommendation	Level of Evidence
2. *Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out.* Adult advocates should have an appropriate background and low caseloads, and be purposefully matched with students. Adequate training and support should be provided for advocates. *Source* – *(1.6 MB)*	Moderate

48

3.	*Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.* Help students to improve academic performance and reengage in school. This should be implemented in conjunction with other recommendations. *Source* *– (1.6 MB)*	Moderate
4.	*Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills.* Students should establish attainable academic and behavioral goals and be recognized when they accomplish them. Schools can teach strategies. *Source* *– (1.6 MB)*	Minimal

Schoolwide interventions

	Recommendation	**Level of Evidence**
5.	*Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.* A personalized learning environment creates a sense of belonging and fosters a school climate where students and teachers get to know one another and can provide academic, social, and behavioral encouragement. *Source* *– (1.6 MB)*	Moderate
6.	*Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school.* Engagement can be increased by providing students with the necessary skills to complete high school and by introducing students to postsecondary options. *Source* *– (1.6 MB)*	Moderate

III. Dropout Prevention Programs

Effective Strategies

http://dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/

Since 1986, the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) has conducted and analyzed research, sponsored extensive workshops, and collaborated with a variety of practitioners to further the mission of reducing school dropout rates by meeting the needs of youth in at-risk situations, including students with disabilities.

Students report a variety of reasons for dropping out of school; therefore, the solutions are multidimensional. The National Dropout Prevention Center has identified 15 effective strategies that have the most positive impact on the dropout rate. These strategies appear to be independent, but actually work well together and frequently overlap. The greatest results will be had when school districts develop a program improvement plan that encompasses most or all of these strategies. These strategies have been implemented successfully at all education levels and environments throughout the nation and are divided into four general categories: school and community perspective, early interventions, basic core strategies, and making the most of instruction.

School and Community Perspective

- Systemic Renewal
- School-Community Collaboration
- Safe Learning Environments

Early Interventions

- Family Engagement
- Early Childhood Education
- Early Literacy Development

Basic Core Strategies

- Mentoring/Tutoring
- Service-Learning
- Alternative Schooling
- After-School Opportunities

Making the Most of Instruction

- Professional Development
- Active Learning
- Educational Technology
- Individualized Instruction
- Career and Technology Education (CTE)

School and Community Perspective

Systemic Renewal

A continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners.
Overview | Resources

School-Community Collaboration

When all groups in a community provide collective support to the school, a strong infrastructure sustains a caring supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve.
Overview | Resources

Safe Learning Environments

A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. A safe learning environment provides daily experiences, at all grade levels, that enhance positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills in all students.
Overview | Resources

Early Interventions

Family Engagement

Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school.
Overview | Resources

Early Childhood Education

Birth-to-five interventions demonstrate that providing a child additional enrichment can enhance brain development. The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately drop out is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of their school experience through the primary grades.
Overview | Resources

Early Literacy Development

Early interventions to help low-achieving students improve their reading and writing skills establish the necessary foundation for effective learning in all other subjects.
Overview | Resources

Basic Core Strategies

Mentoring/Tutoring

Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring, also a one-to-one activity, focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.
Overview | Resources

Service-Learning

Service-learning connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. This teaching/learning method promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels.
Overview | Resources

Alternative Schooling

Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts a variety of options that can lead to graduation, with programs paying special attention to the student's individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.
Overview | Resources

After-School Opportunities

Many schools provide after-school and summer enhancement programs that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of areas. Such experiences are especially important for students at risk of school failure because these programs fill the afternoon "gap time" with constructive and engaging activities.
Overview | Resources

Making the Most of Instruction

Professional Development

Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and have an avenue by which they can continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.
Overview | Resources

Active Learning

Active learning embraces teaching and learning strategies that engage and involve students in the learning process. Students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners when educators show them that there are different ways to learn.
Overview | Resources

Educational Technology

Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction to engage students in authentic learning, addressing multiple intelligences, and adapting to students' learning styles.
Overview | Resources

Individualized Instruction

Each student has unique interests and past learning experiences. An individualized instructional program for each student allows for flexibility in teaching methods and motivational strategies to consider these individual differences.
Overview | Resources

Career and Technology Education (CTE)

A quality CTE program and a related guidance program are essential for all students. School-to-work programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to measure up to the larger demands of today's workplace.
Overview | Resources

Working with Disengaged Students

*H*ere are four general strategies to think about in planning ways to work with disengaged students:

Clarify student perceptions of the problem – Talk openly with students about why they have become disengaged so that steps can be planned for how to alter their negative perceptions and prevent others from developing such perceptions.

Reframe school learning – In the case of those who have disengaged, major reframing in teaching approaches is required so that these students (a) view the teacher as supportive (rather than controlling and indifferent) and (b) perceive content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable. It is important, for example, to eliminate threatening evaluative measures; reframe content and processes to clarify purpose in terms of real life needs and experiences and underscore how it all builds on previous learning; and clarify why the procedures are expected to be effective – especially those designed to help correct specific problems.

Renegotiate involvement in school learning – New and mutual agreements must be developed and evolved over time through conferences with the student and where appropriate including parents. The intent is to affect perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome. The focus throughout is on clarifying awareness of valued options, enhancing expectations of positive outcomes, and engaging the student in meaningful, ongoing decision making. For the process to be most effective, students should be assisted in sampling new processes and content, options should include valued enrichment opportunities, and there must be provision for reevaluating and modifying decisions as perceptions shift.

Reestablish and maintain appropriate working relationships (e.g., through creating a sense of trust, open communication, providing support and direction as needed).

To maintain re-engagement and prevent disengagement, the above strategies must be pursued using processes and content that:

C minimize threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and relatedness to valued others

C maximize such feelings (included here is an emphasis on a school taking steps to enhance public perception that it is a welcoming, caring, safe, and just institution)

C guide motivated practice (e.g., providing opportunities for meaningful applications and clarifying ways to organize practice)

C provide continuous information on learning and performance in ways that highlight accomplishments

C provide opportunities for continued application and generalization (e.g., ways in which students can pursue additional, self-directed learning or can arrange for additional support and direction).

Obviously, it is no easy task to decrease well-assimilated negative attitudes and behaviors. And, the task is likely to become even harder with the escalation toward high-stakes testing policies (no matter how well-intentioned). It also seems obvious that, *for many schools, enhanced achievement test scores will only be feasible when the large number of disengaged students are re-engaged in learning at school.*

All this argues for
    (1) minimizing student disengagement and maximizing re-engagement by moving school culture toward a greater focus on intrinsic motivation and
    (2) minimizing psychological reactance and enhancing perceptions that lead to re-engagement in learning at school by rethinking social control practices.

From a motivational perspective, key facets of accomplishing this involve enhancing learner options and decision making (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: Options and Decision Making

If the only decision Maria can make is between reading book A, which she hates, and reading book B, which she loathes, she is more likely to be motivated to avoid making any decision than to be pleased with the opportunity to decide for herself. Even if she chooses one of the books over the other, the motivational effects the teacher wants are unlikely to occur. Thus:

Choices have to include valued and feasible options.

David wants to improve his reading, but he just doesn't like the programmed materials the teacher uses. James would rather read about science than the adventure stories his teacher has assigned. Matt will try anything if someone will sit and help him with the work. Thus:

Options usually are needed for (a) content and outcomes and (b) processes and structure.

Every teacher knows a classroom program has to have variety. There are important differences among students with regard to the topics and procedures that currently interest and bore them. And for students with learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems, more variety seems necessary.

A greater proportion of individuals with avoidance or low motivation for learning at school are found among those with learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems. For these individuals, few currently available options may be appealing. How much greater the range of options needs to be depends primarily on how strong avoidance tendencies are. In general, however, the initial strategies for working with such students involve

- C further expansion of the range of options for learning (if necessary, this includes avoiding established curriculum content and processes)
- C primarily emphasizing areas in which the student has made personal and active decisions
- C accommodation of a wider range of behavior than usually is tolerated (e.g., a widening of limits on the amount and types of "differences" tolerated)

From a motivational perspective, one of the most basic instructional concerns is the way in which students are involved in making decisions about options. Critically, decision-making processes can lead to perceptions of coercion and control or to perceptions of real choice (e.g., being in control of one's destiny, being self-determining). Such differences in perception can affect whether a student is mobilized to pursue or avoid planned learning activities and outcomes.

People who have the opportunity to make decisions among valued and feasible options tend to be committed to following through. In contrast, people who are not involved in decisions often have little commitment to what is decided. And if individuals disagree with a decision that affects them, besides not following through they may react with hostility.

Thus, essential to programs focusing on motivation are decision-making processes that affect perceptions of choice, value, and probable outcome. Three special points should be noted about decision-making.

- C Decisions are based on current perceptions. As perceptions shift, it is necessary to reevaluate decisions and modify them in ways that maintain a mobilized learner.

- C Effective and efficient decision making is a basic skill, and one that is as fundamental as the three Rs. Thus, if an individual does not do it well initially, this is not a reason to move away from learner involvement in decision making. Rather, it is an assessment of a need and a reason to use the process not only for motivational purposes, but to improve this basic skill.

- C Among students manifesting learning, behavior, and/or emotional problems, it is well to remember that the most fundamental decision some of these individuals have to make is whether they want to participate or not. That is why it may be necessary in specific cases temporarily to put aside established options and standards. As we have stressed, before some students will decide to participate in a proactive way, they have to perceive the learning environment as positively different – and quite a bit so – from the one in which they had so much failure.

Reviews of the literature on human motivation stress that providing students with options and involving them in decision making is an effective way to enhance their engagement in learning and improve their learning and performance. For example, numerous studies have shown that opportunities to express preferences and make choices lead to greater motivation, academic gains, increases in productivity and on-task behavior, and decreases in aggressive behavior. Similarly, researchers report that student participation in goal setting leads to more positive outcomes (e.g., higher commitment to a goal and increased performance).
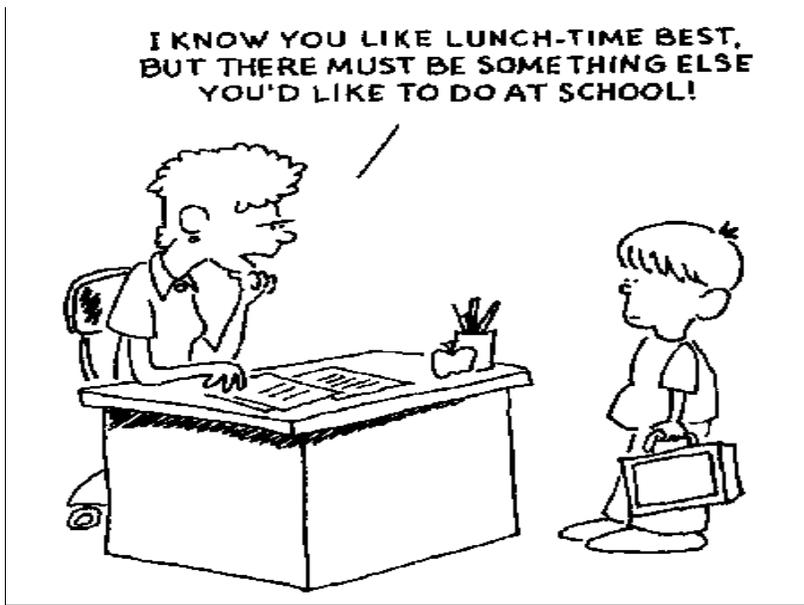
> *Simply put, people who have the opportunity to make decisions among valued and feasible options tend to be committed to following through.*

Conversely, studies indicate that student preferences and involvement tend to diminish when activities are chosen for them.

> *That is, people who are not involved in decisions often have little commitment to what is decided.*

Moreover, if individuals disagree with a decision that affects them, besides not following through they may react hostilely. The implications for classrooms of all the research in this area seem evident: Students who are given more say about what goes on related to their learning at school are likely to show higher degrees of engagement and academic success.

> *Optimally, this means ensuring that decision-making processes maximize perceptions of having a choice from among personally worthwhile options and attainable outcomes. At the very least, it is necessary to minimize perceptions of having no choice, little value, and probable failure.*

I KNOW YOU LIKE LUNCH-TIME BEST, BUT THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO DO AT SCHOOL!

ABOUT SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT AND RE-ENGAGEMENT

A growing research literature is addressing these matters. Below is an excerpt from a recent review which concludes: *Engagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in school; and it is higher in classrooms with supportive teachers and peers, challenging and authentic tasks, opportunities for choice, and sufficient structure.*

Engagement **is defined in three ways in the research literature**:

C *Behavioral engagement* draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out.

C *Emotional engagement* encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work.

C *Cognitive engagement* draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills.

A Key Outcome of Engagement is *Higher Achievement.* The evidence from a variety of studies is summarized to show that engagement positively influences achievement

A Key Outcome of Disengagement is Dropping Out. The evidence shows behavioral disengagement is a precursor of dropping out.

Antecedents of Engagement. Antecedents can be organized into:

C *School level factors*: voluntary choice, clear and consistent goals, small size, student participation in school policy and management, opportunities for staff and students to be involved in cooperative endeavors, and academic work that allows for the development of products

C *Classroom Context*: Teacher support, peers, classroom structure, autonomy support, task characteristics

C *Individual Needs*: Need for relatedness, need for autonomy, need for competence

Measurement of Engagement

C Behavioral Engagement: conduct, work involvement, participation, persistence, (e.g., completing homework, complying with school rules, absent/tardy, off-task)

C Emotional Engagement: self-report related to feelings of frustration, boredom, interest, anger, satisfaction; student-teacher relations; work orientation

C Cognitive Engagement: investment in learning, flexible problems solving, independent work styles, coping with perceived failure, preference for challenge and independent mastery, commitment to understanding the work

"School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence" (2004) by J. Fredricks, P. Blumenfeld, & A. Paris. *Review of Educational Research, 74*, 59-109.

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*Engaging and Re-engaging Families When a Student is Not Doing Well**

Most efforts to involve parents with their child's school seem aimed at those who want and are able to come to the school. It's important to have activities for such parents. It's also important to remember that, at most schools, these parents represent a small percent of families.

How can schools address the rest? Especially those whose children are doing poorly at school. Ironically, efforts to involve families whose youngsters are doing poorly often result in parents becoming less involved. For example, a parent of such a youngster typically is called to school to explore the child's problems and leaves with a sense of frustration, anger, and guilt. It is not surprising, then, that the parent subsequently avoids school contact as much as feasible. If schools really want to involve such families, they must minimize "finger wagging" and move to offer something more than parent education classes.

Start by Understanding Barriers to Home Involvement

Analyses of the problem of enhancing home involvement underscore a host of barriers. Our analysis leads us to group three types: institutional, personal, and impersonal and three forms: negative attitudes, lack of mechanisms/skills, and practical deterrents – including lack of resources.

A few words will help clarify the categories. Institutional barriers stem from deficiencies related to resource availability (money, space, time) and administrative use of what is available. Deficient use of resources includes failure to establish and maintain formal home involvement mechanisms and related skills. It also encompasses general lack of interest or hostile attitudes toward home involvement among school staff, the administration, or the community. Instances of deficient use of resources occur when there is no policy commitment to facilitating home involvement, when inadequate provisions are made for interacting with family members who don't speak English, or when no resources are devoted to upgrading the skills of staff with respect to home involvement.

Similar barriers occur on a more personal level. Specific school personnel or family members may lack requisite skills or find participation uncomfortable because it demands time and other resources. Others may lack interest or feel hostile toward home involvement. For instance, any given teacher or family member may feel it is too much of an added burden to meet to discuss student problems. Others may feel threatened because they think they can't make the necessary interpersonal connections due to racial, cultural, and/or language differences. Still others do not perceive available activities as worth their time and effort.

Impersonal barriers to home and staff participation are commonplace and rather obvious. For example, there can be practical problems related to work schedules, transportation, and childcare. There can also be skill deficiencies related to cultural differences and levels of literacy. There may be lack of interest due to insufficient information about the importance of home involvement.

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*For a fuller discussion, see: *Enhancing Home Involvement to Address Barriers to Learning: A Collaborative Process* online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeinv.pdf

About Addressing the Barriers

Overcoming barriers, of course, is a primary intervention concern. As indicated in the following Exhibit, the first emphasis should be on reducing institutional and impersonal barriers as much as is feasible.

Exhibit

Examples of a Focus on Addressing Barriers to Home Involvement in Schooling

- **Improving mechanisms for communication and connecting school and home** (e.g., facilitating opportunities at school for family networking and mutual support, learning, recreation, enrichment, and for family members to receive special assistance and to volunteer to help; facilitating child care and transportation to reduce barriers to coming to school; language translation; phone calls and/or e-mail from teacher and other staff with good news; frequent and balanced conferences – student-led when feasible; outreach to attract and facilitate participation of hard-to-reach families – including student dropouts)

- **Addressing specific support and learning needs of families** (e.g., support services for those in the home to assist in addressing basic survival needs and obligations to the children; adult education classes to enhance literacy, job skills, English-as-a-second language, citizenship preparation)

- **Involving homes in student decision making** (e.g., families prepared for involvement in program planning and problem-solving)

- **Enhancing home support for learning and development** (e.g., family literacy; family homework projects; family field trips)

- **Recruiting families to strengthen school and community** (e.g., volunteers to welcome and support new families and help in various capacities; families prepared for involvement in school governance)

- **Capacity building of all stakeholders related to enhancing home involvement**

Note: Our Center provides a range of resources for home involvement in general and for outreach to families of struggling students in particular. A place to start is with the survey on home involvement; see
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/toolsforpractice/homeinvolvementsurvey.pdf .

About Engagement and Re-engagement

Understanding the concept of engagement is key to understanding ways to overcome reluctance. Engagement has three facets: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).* Enhancing engagement requires moving from practices that overrely on the use of reinforcers to strategies that incorporate intrinsic motivation theory and research (Deci, 2009).** From this perspective, it becomes evident how essential it is to avoid processes that (a) mainly emphasize "remedying" problems, (b) limit options, and (c) make family members feel controlled and coerced.

Research indicates that engagement is associated with positive outcomes and is higher when conditions are supportive, authentic, ensure opportunities for choice and provide sufficient structure. Conversely, disengagement is associated with threats to feelings of competence, self-determination, and/or relatedness to valued others. Maintaining engagement and re-engaging disconnected individuals requires minimizing conditions that negatively affect intrinsic motivation and maximizing conditions that have a positive motivational effect. Practices for preventing disengagement and efforts to re-engage disconnected families require minimizing conditions that negatively affect intrinsic motivation and maximizing those that enhance it.

Re-engagement provides a major challenge. The challenge is greatest when negative experiences in dealing with the school have resulted in a strong desire to avoid contact.

Obviously, it is no easy task to reverse well-assimilated negative attitudes and behaviors. As with disconnected students, personalized intervention strategies are required. Our work suggests the importance of outreaching to

- *ask individuals to share their perceptions of the reasons for their disengagement;* (This provides an invaluable basis for formulating a personalized plan to alter their negative perceptions and to prevent others from developing such perceptions.)

- *reframe the reasons for and the processes related to home involvement to establish a good fit with the family's needs and interests;* (The intent is to shift perceptions so that the process is viewed as supportive, not controlling, and the outcomes are perceived as personally valuable and obtainable.)

- *renegotiate involvement;* (The intent is to arrive at a mutual agreement with a delineated process for reevaluating and modifying the agreement as necessary.)

- *reestablish and maintain an appropriate working relationship.* (This requires the type of ongoing interactions that over a period of time enhance mutual understanding, provide mutual support, open-up communication, and engender mutual trust and respect.)

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*Fredricks, J., Blumenfeld, P., & Paris, A. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*, 59-109.
**Deci, E.L. (2009). Large-scale school reform as viewed from the self-determination theory perspective. *Theory and Research in Education, 7*, 244-252.

Concluding Comments

Policy may call for and mandate "parent" involvement, but that has been no guarantee of effective practice. The problem is especially acute in middle and secondary schools, schools serving low income homes, and with respect to families who feel blamed when their child is not doing well at school.

As we stress in other Center resources, enhancing home involvement requires greater attention to the full range of caretakers. Think about students who are being raised primarily by grandparents, aunts, older siblings, foster home caretakers, and "nannies." Thus, for schools to significantly enhance home involvement will require (1) broadening the focus beyond thinking only in terms of parents and (2) enhancing the range of ways in which schools connect with primary caretakers. Particular attention must be given to outreaching to those who are reluctant to engage with the school, especially if they have a child who is not doing well.

Also, to avoid marginalization and minimize fragmentation, it is essential to embed home involvement interventions into an overall approach for addressing factors interfering with school learning and performance and fully integrate the work into school improvement policy and practice.

Your mom said that she never saw this report
I sent her about your work.
   What do you know about that?

Gee, I guess the dog has been eating
more than my homework.

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Dropout Prevention

A s the true dropout figures emerge across the nation, the crisis nature of the problem is apparent. Recent reports indicate that more than half a million young people drop out of high school each year, and the rate at which they drop out has remained about the same for the last 30 years (Dynarski, et al., 2008). The data confirm that in far too many school districts a majority of students do not have sufficient learning supports to enable them to succeed at school and will not graduate.

As Gary Orfield, director of the Civil Rights project has stressed:

> There is a high school dropout crisis far beyond the imagination of most Americans, concentrated in urban schools and relegating many thousands of minority children to a life of failure. ... Only half of our nation's minority students graduate from high school along with their peers. For many groups – Latino, black, or Native American males-graduation rates are even lower. ... this [is an] educational and civil rights crisis.

In terms of economics, social programs, and public health, Russell Rumberger has pointed out that the U.S.A. loses over $192 billion in income and tax revenues for each cohort of students who do not finish high school. Relatedly, Dynarski and colleagues (2008) emphasize:

> Dropouts contribute only about half as much in taxes.... They draw larger government subsidies in the form of food stamps, housing assistance, and welfare payments. They have a dramatically increased chance of landing in prison, and they have worse health outcomes and lower life expectancies.

It should be clear to everyone that schools experiencing the most problems are the ones most in need of a school improvement process that not only directly improves instruction, but also includes strategies for developing *a comprehensive system of student/learning supports* (see Exhibit on next page). Unfortunately, during the discussion of the impending reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), currently called *No Child Left Behind*, most of the proposals are limited to debates about standards and measures for academic accountability. Even those that go beyond this emphasis have not been broad enough to address what is needed to enable all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

At this time, every indication is that efforts to develop a comprehensive system of learning supports continue to be marginalized. As our Center stresses in various policy and practice reports, this is true for school improvement, in general, and for discussions related to reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, in particular. It is clear that the many specific agenda items currently competing for sparse resources tend to maintain the unsatisfactory status quo that characterizes the nation's efforts to address major barriers to learning, development, and teaching.

Thus, for many of us, the critical question at this juncture is how to coalesce strategically around a unifying concept. A united effort is the key to breaking through the policy barrier preventing an appropriate exploration of what must happen so that all students truly have an equal opportunity to succeed at school.

Dropout Prevention Resources

School staff and their community colleagues cannot wait for Congress to reauthorize the ESEA. So, we offer the following brief comments and some resources related to preventing student dropout.

- *Be proactive – prevent problems rather than wait for failure.* School factors can account for approximately two-thirds of the differences in mean school dropout rates. Available research suggests that being held back is the single strongest predictor of dropping out for both early and late dropouts. Data indicate that being held back one grade increases the risk of dropping out later by 40 to 50 percent, two grades by 90 percent. Below are resources that provide an overview on the topic of dropout prevention, including alternatives to retention.

  >See the Center's intro packet on dropouts
  http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/
  DropoutPrev/dropout.pdf
  >See: *Youth in Transition* –
  http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/hrsd/prc/
  publications/research/2002-000121/page00.shtml

Exhibit

Academics and Beyond: A Commitment to Equity of Opportunity

It is a given that a strong academic program is the foundation from which all other school interventions must operate. That is, the base for equity is effective personalized instruction (e.g., instructional approaches that account for both individual and group interests, strengths, and weaknesses). However, if there is to be equity of opportunity with respect to public education, policy guidelines and practices also must meet the challenge of enabling learning by addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

THE CHALLENGE

• Every school has a wide range of learners and must ensure equity of opportunity for *all* students and not just a few.

• External and internal barriers to learning and teaching interfere with schools achieving their mission.

• For the many students in need, school districts must design and implement learning support systems that are comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive, and institutionalize them at every school.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

• Learning support systems must address barriers to learning and teaching and ensure that students are engaged and re-engaged in classroom learning. Such systems must reflect the best available science, with a special emphasis on intrinsic motivation theory and practices. A key facet of this not only involves engaging students from the point at which they enter but, after a few years of schooling, also requires a strong emphasis on re-engaging those who have actively disengaged from learning what schools are trying to teach them. Re-engagement that is productive of learning is not about increasing social control, it is about promoting intrinsic motivation (see the relevant references at the end of this article).

• In order to meet the goal of all children learning to high standards or reaching proficiency, the system of learning supports must be fully integrated with instruction.

• Developing a comprehensive system of learning supports requires weaving together the resources of school, home, and community. This involves an operational infrastructure that ensures the learning supports system is treated as primary and essential in planning school improvement.

• Equity requires developing a comprehensive system of learning supports in every school in a district.

• Engagement and re-engagement at school (for students, staff, parents, and other stakeholders) requires empowerment of all and use of processes that equalize power and ensure equity and fairness in decision making. Equalizing power among stakeholders involves contractual agreements, and considerable capacity building.

- *Rethink classroom and school-wide approaches to (a) enhance engaged, personalized learning and (b) provide students the learning supports they need to succeed.* For prevention to be effective, schools must *engage* all students in learning. Doing this involves practices based on understanding *intrinsic* motivation and that use classroom assessments that inform personalized intervention (e.g., response to intervention).

    Children at-risk need to be identified at a young age (as early as preschool). At every age interventions are needed to ensure students feel competent to succeed at school. Some need one-on-one support for a while. Special attention must be given to re-engaging those who have disengaged from classroom learning.

    >See *Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Focused Enabling*
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf

- *Enhance the professional development of teachers and support staff.* Ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to ensure a wider range of students meet standards. Ensure that support staff know how to team with teachers in the classroom to rethink engagement, personalized intervention, and special assistance.

    >See *Preparing All Education Personnel to Address Barriers to Learning & Teaching*
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/preparingall.pdf

- *Provide out-of-school opportunities.* Efforts using out-of-school opportunities to retain middle and high school students begin early. They include tutoring, mentoring, service learning, career advising, and more. When older students (including potential dropouts) work with younger ones, both can improve their literacy skills.

    Service learning, for example, integrates community service into the academic curriculum. Investigators have found that when rigorous study in academic disciplines is linked to serious work on real needs, students' motivation to learn increases. When teachers are rigorous about partnering with young people to design and carry out service-learning projects that are tied to curricular objectives and standards, there are academic, intellectual, civic, ethical, social, and personal benefits.

    >See Quick Find on *After-school Programs*
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/afterschool.htm

- *Offer multiple pathways.* Students need alternative career and vocational pathways that reflect high standards. The concept of multiple pathways focuses on ensuring choice among a variety of high school programs that prepare all students for both college and careers. The emphasis is on providing both academic and career foundations for advanced learning, training, and effective and responsible participation in society. Available choices reflect student interests and community strengths and opportunities. They include programs that provide real world training in areas where graduates can apply for living-wage jobs.

    >See *Multiple Perspectives on Multiple Pathways*
    http://www.idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/mp/index.html

- *Introduce non-traditional approaches.* Educational alternative programs provide a non-traditional approach to curriculum by utilizing alternative teaching strategies. Programs focus upon the needs and interests of students by offering positive school experiences, which are geared for achievement, enhancement of positive self-concept, motivation, reduction of truancy, and reduction of disruptive behavior.

    >See Quick Find on *Alternative Schools and Alternative Education*
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/altschool.htm
    >See Quick Find on *Classroom-Enabling*
    http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/classenable.htm

Concluding Comments

Policy makers are revisiting the problem of preventing school dropouts. Ultimately, as with so many problems in our society, decreasing the rate of dropouts could be tremendously aided by reducing generational poverty. For the immediate future, however, the best opportunity to do something on a large-scale is tied to the impending reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*

In the meantime, individual schools will continue to do what they can. However, as Russell Rumberger sagely notes: Dropping out

is "more of a process than an event ... and there are a lot of telltale signs along the way. It means there are a lot of places in the child's school career where we could intervene to help. It really is going to take some systemic change. Anything short of that is not going to be that successful." In this respect, we are reminded of John Maynard Keynes' insight that the hardest part of changing the course of any enterprise is escaping old ideas.

Note: In September 2008, the U.S. Department of Education released a practice guide on *Dropout Prevention*. This is one of a set of practice guides designed to provide practical recommendations to help address the everyday challenges faced in classrooms and schools. Developed by a panel of nationally recognized experts, practice guides consist of actionable recommendations, strategies for overcoming potential roadblocks, and an indication of the strength of evidence supporting each recommendation. The Department states that each practice guide is subjected to rigorous external peer review.

The *Dropout Prevention* guide provides recommendations that focus on reducing high school dropout rates. Strategies presented include identifying and advocating for at-risk students, implementing programs to improve behavior and social skills, and keeping students engaged in the school environment. Online at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dp_pg_090308.pdf

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Need More?

For links to key references, empirically supported programs, and centers
specializing in the topic and related topics, go to the Center's Online
Clearinghouse Quick Find on *Dropout Prevention*. Online at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/dropout.html

For some quick facts on the impact of the dropout problem, see
http://www.dropoutprevention.org/stats/quick_facts.htm

Other topics that may be helpful include:
>Barriers to Learning   >Classroom Climate   >Classroom-focused Enabling
>Environments that Support Learning   >Learning Supports: Students to Succeed   >Mentoring
>Motivation   >Parent/Home Involvement   >Parenting Skills and Parenting Education
>Prevention for Students "At Risk"   >Resilience/Protective Factors   >Social Promotion
Access these by going to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/ and clicking on Quick Find Search to get to the Quick Find drop down menu.

A Few Websites Dealing Directly with Dropout Prevention

http://www.dropoutprevention.org/ - National Dropout Prevention Centers
http://www.focusas.com/Dropouts.html - Focus Adolescent Services: Youth Who Drop Out
http://www.ed.gov/programs/dropout/index.html — School Dropout Prevention Program
http://www.schoolengagement.org/ — National Center for School Engagement
http://www.youthbuild.org/ — Youth Build USA

And, if you can't find something you need, contact us directly:
By email — Ltaylor@ucla.edu / Phone – (310) 825-3634

Some Related Reading

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Center Documents Relevant to Improving Schools to Prevent Dropouts

>*School Improvement? . . . fully addressing barriers to learning and teaching is the next step! –* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/schoolimprovement.pdf

>*Toward Next Steps in School Improvement: Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching –* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/towardnextstep.pdf

>*Frameworks for Systemic Transformation of Student and Learning Supports –* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/systemic/frameworksforsystemictransformation.pdf

>*Community Schools: Working Toward Institutional Transformation –* http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/csinstitutionaltrans.pdf

>*Engaging and Re-engaging Students in Learning at School –* http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/engagingandre-engagingstudents.pdf

Addressing School Adjustment Problems

It is only a matter of weeks (sometimes days) after students enter a new school or begin a new year that it is clear to most teachers which students are experiencing difficulties adjusting (e.g., to new content and standards, new schools, new teachers, new classmates, etc.). It is particularly poignant to see a student who is trying hard, but is disorganized and can't keep up. If these difficulties are not addressed, student motivation for school dwindles, and behavior problems increase.

This is the time to be *proactive* and to address any problems in the earliest stages. This is the time for *staff development* to focus on the type of strategies stressed in this guidance. This is the time for *student support staff to work with teachers in their classrooms* to intervene before problems become severe and pervasive and require referrals for out-of-class interventions.

This guidance focuses on
>   addressing transition problems
>   enhancing engagement in learning
>   working as a team to prevent problems from escalating.

Also, included are links to in-depth prevention and early intervention strategies.

SOME GUIDELINES:

>   Through enhanced personal contacts, build a positive working relationship with the youngster and family.
>   Focus first on assets (e.g. positive attributes, outside interests, hobbies, what the youngster likes at school and in class).
>   Ask about what the youngster doesn't like at school.
>   Explore the reasons for "dislikes" (e.g., Are assignments seen as too hard? as uninteresting? Is the youngster embarrassed because others will think s/he does not have the ability to do assignments? Is the youngster picked on? rejected? alienated?)
>   Explore other possible causal factors.
>   Explore what the youngster and those in the home think can be done to make things better (including extra support from a volunteer, a peer, friend, etc.).

SOME BASIC STRATEGIES

Try new strategies in the classroom – based on the best information about what is causing the problem. Enhance student engagement through (a) an emphasis on learning and enrichment options that are of current greatest interest and which the student indicates (s)he wants to and can pursue and (b) a temporary deemphasis on areas that are not of high interest.

If a student seems easily distracted, the following might be used:

⊤ identify any specific environmental factors that distract the student and make appropriate environmental changes
⊤ have the student work with a group of others who are task-focused
⊤ designate a volunteer to help the student whenever s/he becomes distracted and/or starts to misbehave, and if necessary, to help the student make transitions
⊤ allow for frequent "breaks"
⊤ interact with the student in ways that will minimize confusion and distractions (e.g., keep conversations relatively short; talk quietly and slowly; use concrete terms; express warmth and nurturance)

If a student needs more direction, the following might be used:

⊤ develop and provide sets of specific prompts, multisensory cues, steps, etc. using oral, written, and perhaps pictorial and color-coded guides as organizational aids related to specific learning activities, materials, and daily schedules

⊤ ensure someone checks with the student frequently throughout an activity to provide additional support and guidance in concrete ways (e.g., model, demonstrate, coach)

⊤ support student's efforts related to self-monitoring and self-evaluation and provide nurturing feedback keyed to the student's progress and next steps

If the student has difficulty finishing tasks as scheduled, the following might be used:

⊤ modify the length and time demands of assignments and tests

⊤ modify the nature of the process and products (e.g., allow use of technological tools and allow for oral, audio-visual, arts and crafts, graphic, and computer generated products)

TO ACCOMPLISH THE ABOVE: Enhance use of aides, volunteers, peer tutors/coaches, mentors, those in the home, etc. not only to help support student efforts to learn and perform, but to enhance the student's social support network. Encourage structured staff discussions and staff development about what teachers can do and what other staff (mentors, student support staff, resource teachers, etc.) can do to team with teachers in their classrooms to enable school adjustment.

WHAT IF THE ABOVE STRATEGIES DON"T WORK?

If the new strategies don't work, *talk to others* at school to learn about approaches they find helpful (e.g., reach out for support/mentoring/coaching, participate with others in clusters and teams, observe how others teach in ways that effectively address differences in motivation and capability, request additional staff development on working with such youngsters).

After trying all the above, add some tutoring designed to enhance student engagement in learning and to facilitate learning of specific academic and social skills that are seen as barriers to effective classroom performance and learning.

Only after all this is done and has not worked is it time to use the school's referral processes to ask for additional support services. As such services are added, it, of course, becomes essential to coordinate them with what is going on in the classroom, school-wide, and at home.

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THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES WILL BE HELPFUL FOR STRUCTURED STAFF DISCUSSIONS:

< Enabling Learning in the Classroom – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/enabling.htm
< Re-engaging Student in Learning – http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/quicktraining/reengagingstudents.pdf
< Support for Transitions to Address Barriers to Learning (Training Tutorial)
< Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/transition_tt/transindex.htm
< Quick Find: links to resources on Classroom Focused Enabling and on Motivation

Other resources also can be readily found and accessed by topic through our Quick Find Online Clearinghouse -- see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/websrch.htm   All Center materials are available for downloading, copying, and sharing on the Center website.

And, if you can't find something you need, contact us directly:
By email — Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Supporting Successful Transition to Ninth Grade

Starting ninth grade is not just another grade transition. For most students it is a major life change. Some don't even survive the transition and become early "push outs." For too many others, the emotional toll is high, and this exacerbates behavior and learning problems.

Besides the obvious changes related to school setting and instructional content, processes, and outcome standards, the move to ninth grade usually is accompanied by notable changes in role and status and interpersonal relationships. These yield significant shifts in self-perceptions and expectations and in what is valued by the youngster.

Thus, from a developmental and motivational perspective, eighth and ninth grades are critical times for transition supports designed to assure *all* students have an equal opportunity to succeed at school. Such interventions must encompass programs to

    C   promote and maintain positive attitudes during the transition

    C   anticipate and prevent problems

    C   provide special assistance to those whose problems make it highly likely that the transition will be difficult to negotiate

    C   monitor transitions in order to respond at the first indications a student is having transition problems

Successful ninth grade transition programs are built on the foundation of good schooling through the eighth grade. Eighth grade provides the opportunity for a variety of specific activities aimed at enhancing positive motivation about and capabilities for making the ninth grade transition. This obviously includes traditional broad-band orientation programs for students and their parents (e.g., packets, tours, and discussions clarifying basic info and dispelling myths). But a comprehensive focus on supporting the transition encompasses much more.

With full appreciation of what the ninth grade transition experience entails, support for transition also includes programs designed to deepen students' knowledge and skills, increase social and emotional problem solving capabilities, and enhance student feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness with supportive others.

Examples

Special course and use of natural opportunities: Offering a transition course in eighth grade and using natural opportunities throughout the school day to enhance specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to the transition.

Peer buddies: Connecting eighth graders to ninth grade peer buddies during the last month before the transition or at least from day one in ninth grade. Such buddies would be trained to participate in orienting and welcoming, provide social support for the period of transition, and introduce the newcomer to peers and into activities during the first few weeks of transition.

Personalized programs for those already identified as likely to have difficulty with the transition: Such programs need to be designed no later than the middle of eighth grade. They should be designed to develop an individual transition plan, with specific objectives related to both motivational and capability concerns.

Special assistance for those who don't transition successfully: Ninth grade teachers usually are painfully aware of students who are not making a successful transition. The school's learning supports' component should include a system for responding as soon as a teacher identifies such a student. Such a system should be prepared to develop personalized transition supports and specialized assistance as needed.

As with all good interventions, transition support should aspire to creating a good "match" or "fit" with students. This means attending to diversity among students with particular respect to how differences are manifested in terms of motivation, developmental capability, and actions.

Environments also should be redesigned to maximize opportunities to enhance competence, self-determination, and connectedness to valued others and to minimize threats to such feelings. Particular attention needs to be paid to enhancing opportunities for social support, counseling, and advocacy by designated school staff (e.g., a homeroom teacher, a member of the school's support staff) and to strategies for eliminating victimization.

Successful transitions are marked by students who feel a sense of connectedness and belonging, who are engaged in classroom learning, and who are able to cope with daily stressors.

The Center's Quick Find Online Clearinghouse has material on Transitions that provides helpful resources:

Go to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm

Among the sources you can link to from the Quick Find is the Center's intro packet entitled:
Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support

and a training tutorial entitled:
Support for Transitions to Address Barriers to Learning

One School's Approach

Wheaton High School – http://montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/wheatonhs/academies/ninthgrade.shtm

The Ninth Grade Academy (designed as a small learning community) is a school-within-a-school organized around interdisciplinary teams of English, math, science, and social studies who share a specific area of the school building. Freshmen are assigned to a house of 80-100 students. (A house is an organizational arrangement that assigns students and teachers to teams in a set of rooms). Mainstreamed students, supported by special education instructors, are assigned to a house with the same team expectations.

It is a mission of the Ninth Grade Academy to ensure incoming freshman make a smooth transition. The overall goal is to provide programs and supports addressing the unique needs of entering freshman resulting in increased achievement. Incoming freshmen are connected to a select team of caring Academy staff to personalize the transition and address specific students' needs. The freshmen orientation course "Connections" focuses on developing and honing the personal and academic skills of these students, while connecting them to the academic and career pathways that will define their secondary school experiences.

Specific measurable objectives include:

Objective 1: The passing rate of students from grade 9 to grade 10 will increase by 5%.
Objective 2: The percentage of students losing credit and/or failing one or more courses during the freshman year will decline by 5% for each sub-group of the population.
Objective 3: The average GPA of freshman will increase by .25 for each sub group of the population.
Objective 4: The percentage of freshmen who pass the countywide end of course exam and/or the High School Assessment in English, Algebra 1, Biology, and NSL will increase by 5% for each sub-group of the population.
Objective 5: The percentage of freshman who are eligible to participate in extracurricular activities will increase by 5% for each sub group of the population, and the participation levels in these activities will increase at the same level.

Benefits to Be Accrued by Students

C   increased academic achievement and reductions in the achievement gap
C   increased student attendance, attitudes and behavior
C   reduced isolation that often seeds alienation and violence
C   promotion of positive feelings about self and others
C   increased numbers of students matriculating to 10th grade
C   lower student drop out rate
C   increased extracurricular participation rate
C   enhanced student awareness of academic/career options
C   stronger student-teacher relationships
C   enhanced student ability to apply academic content and skills for success in real world settings
C   involvement of each student along with his/her parent/guardian in a guidance and advisory system.

Dropouts and the 9th Grade Bulge

Evidence is growing that students who fall off track during the freshman year have very low odds of earning a high school diploma. Indeed, analysis of the progression of students through high school suggests that approximately one-third of the nation's recent high school dropouts never were promoted beyond ninth grade.

Ruth Curran Neild (2009)

Over the past two decades, a great deal of concern has been expressed over the number of students who do not make a successful transition to high school. The consensus is that such students are particularly at risk for dropping out.

Available data suggest that more than half a million young people drop out of high school each year and the rate has remained fairly constant for many years. As Gary Orfield, director of the Civil Rights project has stressed:

> There is a high school dropout crisis far beyond the imagination of most Americans, concentrated in urban schools and relegating many thousands of minority children to a life of failure. ... Only half of our nation's minority students graduate from high school along with their peers. For many groups – Latino, black, or Native American males-graduation rates are even lower. ... this [is an] educational and civil rights crisis.

In terms of economics, social programs, and public health, Russell Rumberger has pointed out that the U.S.A. loses over $192 billion in income and tax revenues for each cohort of students who do not finish high school. Relatedly, Dynarski and colleagues emphasize:

> Dropouts contribute only about half as much in taxes.... They draw larger government subsidies in the form of food stamps, housing assistance, and welfare payments. They have a dramatically increased chance of landing in prison, and they have worse health outcomes and lower life expectancies.

What is the 9th Grade Bulge?

The bulge, sometime referred to as the bottleneck, is the name education researchers give to the percentage increase in students in the 9th grade over the number who were enrolled in 8th grade.

Starting 9th grade is not just another grade transition; it is a major life change. Students who find the transition especially frustrating and discouraging pay an emotional toll, and this exacerbates behavior and learning problems. Unsuccessful 9th grade transitions are correlated with repeating the grade, disconnecting from school, and dropping out.

Approximately 22% of students repeat ninth grade (more than any other grade). In a 2012 report National High School Center indicates data showing that "In 1982, ninth grade enrollment was 4% higher than eighth grade enrollment. In 2011, this bulge had grown to a 12% increase in enrollment in the ninth grade."

Just surviving 9th grade, of course, isn't sufficient. Students must get there on a track that enables eventual graduation (i.e., with passing grades, appropriate course credits).

What Interferes with Making a Successful Transition?

Many factors have been identified as related to school transition and adjustment problems. The risk literature points to experiences stemming from neighborhood, family, school, peer, and personal conditions.

Problems in 9th grade often are carry-overs from middle school (and even earlier). The transition to middle school also is a challenging life change for many students. The situation calls for increasing independence, taking on more responsibilities, and finding a satisfying place among one's peers. By the time some students reach 8th grade, it is evident that they are not performing well academically, socially, or both. It is likely their move to 9th grade will not go well.

Students whose 8th grade functioning does not raise alarms still may be vulnerable. As Neild (2009) notes in addition to past experiences and performance:

- ninth grade coincides with life-course changes, such as reduced parental supervision and increased peer influence
- in moving to a new school, students must break the bonds they have formed with their middle-school teachers and peers
- organization of some high schools is itself a major source of students' difficulty.

Students making unsuccessful transitions and adjustments to any grade have lower GPAs, more failing grades, and tend to have more absences and misbehavior referrals. They may experience significant shifts in self-perceptions, expectations, and values. Major changes in interpersonal relationships, roles, and status are common; some youngsters become isolated and alienated.

What's Being Done About It?

There are, of course, a variety of 9th grade transition-oriented efforts. And when students do not made a successful transition into 9th grade, some efforts usually are made to enhance their school adjustment and provide academic remediation. Prior to 9th grade, the focus is on transition and prevention programs. In 8th grade, prevention programs target and provide various types of interventions to students seen as at-risk. Dropout prevention programs overlap such programs.

Transition-oriented efforts. These include summer and 9th grade introductory programs, special supports for targeted incoming 9th graders, and a variety of specialized academies. And usually embedded in such efforts are strategies to mobilize home involvement and engagement.

Types of Activity Schools Offer for 9th Grade Transition

- *Engaging summer programs* to help stem summer learning loss, enable students to catch up, enhance understanding of the new school, and provide bridging activity.
- *Ninth grade introductory activities* designed to familiarize students with campus facilities and opportunities and provide welcoming and caring social supports (e.g., summer bridging, first day transition program, buddy systems, counseling and mentoring by staff, monthly newcomer engagement programs)
- *Special supports for students identified as at-risk.* These are illustrated by dropout prevention programs (see examples below). Many students need personalized mentoring, counseling, and tutoring help with academics throughout the year. Personalizing the interventions means providing a good match to each student's motivation and capabilities.
- *Ninth grade academies* include opportunities for intensive, engaging transition supports.
- *Home involvement and engagement* to aid transition to 9th grade. Embedded into any of the above can be a focus on helping parents and other caretakers in the home deal with transition concerns, including learning ways to support the student's transition. Properly addressed, the focus on the home hopefully generalizes to ongoing home support for the school (e.g., volunteering and other forms of participation).

Methodologically sound research and program evaluations on transition and dropout programs are sparse. The limited findings mean that references such as the *What Works Clearinghouse* cite a relatively few programs. For example, only eight dropout prevention programs warranted inclusion, all of which report *potentially* positive effects for progressing in school (but no robust findings about school completion).

Dropout Prevention. These efforts mostly focus on identifying and providing interventions to students who have fallen off the track to graduation. Identification involves use of "early warning systems" (e.g., students receiving poor grades in or failing core subjects, low attendance, grade retention, and disengagement from instruction). Students of color from low-income families and communities are disproportionately represented. Research on early warning systems suggests that future dropouts can be identified as early as sixth grade and that responding quickly to indicators of disengagement can prevent academic and behavior problems.

Here are three examples of programs cited in the *What Works Clearinghouse*:

>*Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success* (ALAS): This intervention program is designed to reduce dropout among middle school at-risk Latino middle school students. It aims at improving the connection and coordination between home and school. Counselors provide students and parents with support. Parents are informed about attendance and provided direct instruction and modeling for addressing the student's academic and social challenges. Counselors personally invest in the student's success, follow up with teachers, and provide group bonding experiences and positive reinforcements. The What Works Clearinghouse's analysis indicates that the program has demonstrated potentially positive effects in keeping students in school and making progress. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED493773.pdf

>*Check & Connect.* This program is designed to enhance student engagement at school and with learning for marginalized, disengaged students in grades K-12. The focus is on relationship building, problem solving and capacity building, and persistence. It aims at fostering completion of schooling with academic and social competence. Processes use a trained mentor whose primary goal is to keep education a salient issue for disengaged students and their teachers and family members. The mentor works with a caseload of students and families over time – following students from program to program and school to school; monitoring for truancy, behavior referrals, and academic performance; meeting with students weekly; and keeping families updated. The program has demonstrated a positive effect on keeping students in school and a potentially positive effect on progress. http://www.checkandconnect.umn.edu/

>*Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program* (VYP). This was created by the Intercultural Development Research Association as a dropout prevention program. It identifies at-risk middle and high school students and enlists them as cross-age tutors for elementary school youngsters who are also struggling in school. By giving the "Valued Youth" tutors personal and academic responsibility, the intent is for them to learn self-discipline and develop self-esteem and for schools to enhance their valuing of students considered at-risk. A quasi-experimental study found a 1% dropout rate for the tutors, whereas the rate for a comparison group was 12%. http://www.idra.org/Coca-Cola_Valued_Youth_Program.html/#sthash.0yQT7xNO.dpuf

In contrast to the above, some programs aim at structural and transformative school changes. For example:

Talent Development High Schools. The approach is to establish small learning communities, where students are supported by a team of teachers throughout the year. Teachers have common planning time to address the needs of students and to take advantage of assets and approaches from cross-disciplinary perspectives. Uses an "acceleration" curricula designed to be both challenging while simultaneously building basic skills to catch students up to their on-grade-level

peers as quickly as possible. A key component is creation of a 9th grade academy to create a "school within a school" for a subgroup. Block scheduling is used to teach in-depth lessons and enable students the opportunity to catch up and finish freshman English and Algebra I by the end of the year. Students take a seminar designed to prepare them for high school's rigorous academic demands. The academy also aims to reduce feelings isolation and anonymity. The What Works Clearinghouse rates the approach as providing potentially positive effects for progressing in school. http://www.tdschools.org/about/

What's Missing?

Facilitating transition is not an event, it is an ongoing process that is continued until a newcomer makes a good academic, social, and behavioral adjustment at the school. Successful transitions are marked by students who feel a sense of connectedness and belonging, who are engaged in classroom learning, and who are able to cope with daily stressors.

Facilitating successful 9th grade transition and preventing dropouts starts in elementary school and continues through 8th grade. Middle school provides many opportunities for specific activities aimed at enhancing positive motivation about and capabilities for learning and schooling. The 8th grade transition efforts usually include at least traditional broad-band orientation programs for students and their parents (e.g., packets, tours, and discussions clarifying basic info and dispelling myths). But a comprehensive approach to transition and dropout prevention calls for much more.

From a developmental and motivational perspective, interventions must encompass a focus on:

- promoting positive attitudes prior to and maintaining engaged learning during the transition
- ensuring social supports (e.g., peer buddies, mentors, home supports)
- anticipate and prevent problems
- provide personalized special assistance to those whose problems make it highly likely that the transition will be difficult to negotiate
- monitor transitions in order to respond at the first indications a student is having transition problems and to maintain supports until the student is effectively engaged in classroom instruction and making appropriate progress

As with all good interventions, transition support should aspire to creating a good "match" or "fit" with students. This means attending to diversity among students with particular respect to motivational and developmental differences. Environments should be redesigned to enhance intrinsic motivation for learning and positive behavior by maximizing opportunities to enhance feelings of competence, self-determination, and connectedness to valued and supportive others and minimizing threats to such feelings. This includes the emphasis on deepening knowledge and skills and increasing social and emotional problem solving capabilities. Special attention needs to be paid to enhancing social supports and advocacy for students and countering victimization (e.g., connecting students to a designated school staff patron/mentor/advisor/counselor, such as a homeroom teacher or a member of the school's student support staff).

Finally, it is essential to face the reality that the number of students in many schools who need help far outpaces the help available and that many students are not in situations that enhance equity of opportunity. From this perspective, we advocate for embedding transition and dropout prevention efforts into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students. Such a system involves a fundamental transformation of current student and learning supports. For details on what such a transformation entails, see the 2015 Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

Concluding Comments

As Slavin (2009) cautions: "Success in the early grades does not guarantee success in later schooling, but failure in the early grades virtually ensures failure in later schooling." The 9th grade bulge and dropping out are painful reminders that too many students are being left behind. Given the multitude of causal factors, it is not surprising that prevailing efforts to address the problem have not been highly successful. It is time to go beyond current approaches. At every grade, the problems experienced by students require a unified, comprehensive, and equitable focus on addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.

Some Center Resources Related to this Resource

See the Center's Online Clearinghouse Quick Finds. In particular, see the Quick Finds on:

>*Transitions* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2101_01.htm
>*Dropout Prevention* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/dropout.html

Examples of documents (with links) included in the *Transitions* Quick Find are:

>*Transitions: Turning Risks into Opportunities for Student Support*
>*Support for Transitions to Address Barriers to Learning*
>*Supporting successful transition to ninth grade*
>*Addressing Barriers to Successful Middle Transitioin.*
>*Transitions to and from Elementary, Middle, and High School*
>*Getting the School Year Off to a Good Start*

Examples of documents (with links) included in the *Dropout Prevention* Quick Find are:

>*Dropout Prevention*
>*Early High School Dropouts: What are their Characteristics?*
>*Concerns = Opportunities: Addressing Student Disengagement, Acting Out,*
> *and Dropouts by Moving in New Directions*
>*Re-Engaging Students in Learning at School*
>*School Dropout Prevention: A Civil Rights and Public Health Imperative*
>*School Attendance Problems: Are Current Policies & Practices Going in*
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A Few Examples of Resources Developed by the Center

Enhancing Classroom Approaches for Addressing Barriers to Learning: Classroom-Enforced enabling

Module I provides a big picture framework for understanding barriers to learning and how school reforms need to expand in order to effectively address such barriers. Modules II focuses on classroom practices to engage and re-engage students in classroom learning. Module III explores the roles teachers need to play in ensuring their school develops a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to learning.

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/contedu/cfe.pdf

Re-engaging Students in Learning (Quick Training Aid)

This quick training aid provides a brief overview and fact sheets on re-engaging students in learning, particularly on motivation. It also includes several tools and handouts for use with presentations. Keywords: motivation, learning, classrooms

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/reengage_qf/

A center Policy & Practice Analysis Brief: School Attendance Problems: Are Current Policies & Practices Going in the Right Direction?

Every student absence jeopardizes the ability of students to succeed at school and schools to achieve their mission. Students who are not at school cannot receive instruction. Schools funded on the basis of average daily attendance have less resources to do the job. Some youngsters who are truant from school engage in behaviors that are illegal. And the correlates of school attendance problems go on and on. Reducing school absences is one of the most challenging matters facing schools. In addressing the problem, it is important to begin by exploring two questions: What factors lead to student absences? How can schools more effectively address the problem? This brief provides a quick overview of issues related to school attendance problems and then frames directions for policy and practice. As with all Center briefs, it is meant to highlight the topic and provide a tool for discussion by school policy makers and practitioners.

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Briefs/school attendance problems.pdf

IV. Policy Issues in Dropout Prevention

- **Graduation Promise Act of 2013**

- **Building a Grad Nation 2014-2015 Update**

- **What Your Community Can Do**

- **Governors' Association Recommendation**

IV. Policy Issues in Dropout Prevention

Graduation Promise Act

S.940 — 113th Congress (2013-2014)
Introduced in Senate (05/14/2013)

Summary

https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/940

Graduation Promise Act of 2013 - Authorizes the Secretary of Education to make matching grants to states and, through them, subgrants to local educational agencies (LEAs) for differentiated high school improvement systems targeting support to schools with low student achievement and graduation rates after such schools fail for two consecutive years to make annual measurable growth pursuant to state academic performance standards. Allots grant funds to states pursuant to a formula that favors states with low graduation rates and a high percentage of students attending low-income LEAs.

Requires state grantees to establish comprehensive school performance indicators and minimum annual improvement benchmarks for use, in addition to annual measurable growth indicators, in analyzing school performance and determining the improvement category into which a school is placed.

Directs LEA subgrantees to: (1) categorize each of their schools that fail to make annual measurable growth for two consecutive years as needing targeted intervention, whole school reforms, or replacement; (2) convene a local school improvement team for each of such schools that will use school performance indicators, annual measurable growth indicators, and other relevant data to conduct a school needs assessment and develop a multiyear school improvement plan tailored to the school's need categorization; and (3) support the successful implementation of such plans and district-wide high school improvement strategies.

Authorizes the Secretary to award competitive grants to LEAs, nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education to develop and implement, or replicate, effective secondary school models for struggling students and dropouts.

IV. Policy Issues in Dropout Prevention

EVERYONE GRADUATES CENTER

Building a Grad Nation 2014-2015 Update

http://new.every1graduates.org/building-a-grad-nation-2014-2015-update/

Comments

Links to State Profiles are Provided

Too many students are trapped in failing schools or in communities of intergenerational poverty with too few ways out.

This sixth annual report to the nation highlights the significant progress that has been made, but also the serious challenges that remain – closing gaping graduation gaps between various student populations; tackling the challenge in key states and school districts; and keeping the nation's focus on ensuring that all students – whom Robert Putnam calls "our kids" – have an equal chance at the American Dream.

> Though the challenge may seem large, to get to a 90 percent graduation rate for all students, the nation will need just 310,000 more graduates in the Class of 2020 than in the Class of 2013, which based on third-quarter progress, is attainable.

Summary

As the third quarter comes to a close and the fourth and final quarter begins, the nation will need to double down on its efforts to increase graduation rate outcomes for low-income, minority, and special education students, and continue driving progress in big states and large school districts, where the majority of the country's student population resides.

1. Graduating on time is the norm for middle- and high-income students, but not for their low-income peers.
2. Enrollment of students of color is growing rapidly across the country, and it is essential that states focus on improving graduation rates for these subgroups.
3. The graduation rate gap between students with disabilities and students in the general population ranges from 3.3 percentage points to 58.8 points.
4. In the United States, there are 500 public school districts with K-12 enrollments of 15,000 or more that collectively educate 40 percent of all public school students.
5. Fifty-five percent of America's public high school students live in just 10 states. These Big States are home to nearly 8.5 million of the nation's 14.7 million public high school students.

We also provide policy recommendations at the end of each section, and have compiled a list of further federal and state policy recommendations at the end of the report.

Download the Full Report

Download the 2014-2015 Update – Building a Grad Nation Executive summary, available here in pdf, and the Full Report, available here in pdf.

IV. Policy Issues in Dropout Prevention

What your Community Can Do to End its Drop-Out Crisis: Learning from Research and Practice

by Robert Balfanz, CSOS (Center for Social Organization of Schools), Johns Hopkins University

Call To Action

Many communities in the United States face a silent epidemic-year after year, one third to half or more of the primarily low-income and minority students they educate in their public school systems fail to graduate from high school (http://www.civicenterprises.net)   Decades ago, this would not have been a crisis. Factory jobs provided an avenue for employment and upward mobility for young adults without high school degrees. Today, the unemployment rate for young adults without a high school diploma is staggering. As a result, failure to graduate from high school has become a ticket to the underclass. For a single individual this can be tragic, but when the majority or near majority of students from entire neighborhoods and communities fail to graduate, the social and economic costs are profound and far reaching.

It does not have to be this way. We know enough about who dropouts are, why they drop out and how to prevent it to help communities confront and stop their dropout crisis. Over a decade's worth of research, development and direct action confronting the dropout crisis indicates that, while it will not be easy, quick or cost-free, this is a crisis that can alleviated by a combination of effort and policy (http://www.all4ed.org, http://www.jff.org).   Moreover, it is worth doing. Pick your issue – improving the economic vitality of your community, cutting its crime rate, reducing its social welfare costs, expanding its middle class, reducing concentrated poverty, or achieving social justice - stopping the dropout crisis in your community is a means to achieve it.

The following is offered as roadmap or practical advice on how to begin. Like all advice it should be taken with a grain of salt. Each community is different and I can only report on what I have read and learned, so this knowledge and experience must be integrated with local facts and the characteristics of each community. The advice is based on what is known at the national level about the nature of the dropout crisis and how it can be prevented (http://www.gradgap.org), experience over the past decade working with middle and high schools that serve low-income students in more than 30 communities to implement the Talent Development Middle and High School whole school reform models (http://www.csos.jhu.edu) , and operation of the Baltimore Talent Development High School, an Innovation High School in the heart of one of the highest poverty neighborhoods in America (http://www.btdhs.org) .

A Three Step Plan for Ending the Dropout Crisis in Your Community

There are three essential steps to ending the dropout crisis in our communities. First, your community needs to understand its dropout crisis and the resources it is currently devoting to ending it. Second, your community needs to develop a strategic dropout prevention, intervention and recovery plan that focuses community resources, efforts and reforms at the key points where and when students fall off the path to high school graduation. Finally, your community will need to gather the human and financial resources needed for a comprehensive and sustained campaign and develop the evaluation, accountability and continuous improvement mechanisms needed to maintain it.

Step 1- Understand the Dropout Crisis in Your Community
Who Drops Out in our Community?

Why do Students in our Community Dropout?

Knowing how many students are dropping out, how far from graduation they are, and from which schools they are dropping out is only the first piece of knowledge needed. It is also essential to gain an understanding of the source of the dropout crisis in your community. Research and experience indicates that there are four broad classes of dropouts.

1) **Life events**- students who dropout because of something that happens outside of school -- they become pregnant, get arrested or have to go to work to support members of their family.

2) **Fade Outs**- students who have generally been promoted on time from grade to grade and may even have above grade level skills but at some point become frustrated or bored and stop seeing the reason for coming to school. Once they reach the legal dropout age they leave, convinced that they can find their way without a high school diploma or that a GED will serve them just as well.

3) **Push Outs**- students who are or are perceived to be difficult, dangerous or detrimental to the success of the school and are subtly or not so subtly encouraged to withdraw from the school, transfer to another school or are simply dropped from the rolls if they fail too many courses or miss too many days of school and are past (or in some cases not even past) the legal dropout age.

4) **Failing to Succeed**- students who fail to succeed in school and attend schools that fail to provide them with the environments and supports they need to succeed. For some, initial failure is the result of poor academic preparation, for others it is rooted in unmet social-emotional needs. Few students drop out after their initial experience with school failure. In fact, most persist for years, only dropping out after they fall so far behind that success seems impossible or they are worn down by repeated failure. In the meantime, they are literally waving their hands saying "help" through poor attendance, acting out and/or course failure.

Are Our Schools Organized to Reduce Dropouts or Do They Inadvertently Help Create Them?

The last question communities need to ask themselves about their dropout crisis is whether their schools are making it better or worse. The community needs to examine closely all the high schools from which the majority of students are dropping out and the middle schools that feed them. It needs to take a hard look at three tough issues.

In sum, the last piece of understanding the dimensions, location and characteristics of the dropout crisis in a community is to hold the high schools with high dropout rates and the middle schools that feed them up to a mirror. Has the community organized its public education system so a sub-set of its secondary schools face an almost overwhelming level of educational challenge? Has it further responded not by providing these schools with additional resources, but in fact by providing them fewer resources when teacher quality and the actual educational dollars spent at each secondary school are examined? Is it allowing these schools to continue year after year with dysfunctional school climates that are either chaotic or organized around low expectations and as a result witness a high rate of teacher and administrator turnover and absences? In short, has it created dropout factories?

Step 2- Combine the Basics of Good Schooling with Focused Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery Efforts at the Key Points where Students Fall off the Path to Graduation

In order to stop the dropout crisis communities need to work to insure that two things occur in their schools. First, that all students receive the basics of good schooling—engaging, meaningful ,and challenging curriculum and instruction, delivered by well- trained and supported teachers, in serious and safe schools designed to provide students with the personalized attention they need to succeed in a high-standards learning environment.   Communities, however, also need to realize that for schools in high-poverty neighborhoods this will not be enough. On top of the basics of good schooling a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention and recovery system needs to be put in place and efforts need to be focused at the key points where students fall off the path to graduation.

The Transition into Elementary School

The primary goal at this level is to insure that all students have a successful start. This has three aspects. Students need to acquire the cognitive skills and knowledge that will let them successfully learn in school. They also need to be socialized into the norms and behaviors of schooling. The tricky part is that this has to be done in a joyful manner.

Every Student a Successful Early Reader

Nothing is more essential to success in school than being able to read well. Communities must insure that everything humanly possible and then some is done to insure that all students are both reading at appropriate levels by second grade and are on track to make a successful transition to the more complex reading skills needed for the upper elementary grades (http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/upload/report_pdf.pdf).

Socialize Students into the Norms of Schooling in a Joyful Manner

Students who live in high-poverty environments can experience high levels of uncertainty and stress in their lives. This can cause young students to either withdraw or act out. School must be an antidote to this. Young students need to see that learning is exciting and that school is a place where they are cared for. They need to feel secure. At the same time they need to be successfully socialized into the expected norms of activity and behavior in schools-everything from raising hands to taking turns to working quietly.

Do Not Expel Primary Students.

This may seem far-fetched but it appears to be a growing phenomenon (http://www.fcd-us.org/usr_doc/ExpulsionCompleteReport.pdf). Giving up on a 5-, 6- or 7-year-old child is not a productive solution for anyone. Expelling primary school students should be viewed as total system failure and additional skilled adults should be provided to the classrooms where this is occurring to provide both the students and the teachers the supports they need to succeed.

Do Not Use Special Education as the First Resort for Students Who are not Succeeding Behaviorally or Academically

Special Education serves an important function but assigning too many students to special education is counter-productive (http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007043.pdf). Special education with its individual education plans (IEPs) may seem like an effective support for struggling students. There is an inherent contradiction to special education, however, which limits its effectiveness. The special education services required by an individual education plan must, in the main, be delivered within a system of mass education. If there are two or three students in a class with IEPs teachers can with the support of special educators make accommodations. But when there are five, seven or ten students with IEPs, each pulling the teacher in different directions this becomes nearly impossible. The result is that IEPs are not fully implemented and alternative strategies not attempted because it is assumed that the IEPs preclude it. The students ultimately become no one's responsibility and fall through the cracks. In short, there is tipping point where special education fails to achieve its stated goals. As such, it should be seen more as strategic tool for students with clear needs that can be successfully addressed through its supports, rather than a hope and prayer when nothing else seems to be working.

Do Not Forget About Mathematics

As important as reading is, it should not dominate early schooling to such an extent that mathematics is ignored. Recent research has shown that much of young children's free play has a mathematical component. In addition, we have learned that nearly all children, including children from high-poverty neighborhoods, enter kindergarten with the basic building blocks of mathematics — being able to count to 10 and recognize the basic shapes in place (http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000070.pdf). In short, all young children have mathematical interests and aptitudes. These need to be developed in a serious but playful manner beginning in pre-school. A number of good early mathematics programs has been developed in recent years with support from the National Science Foundation. Absent good early mathematical instruction which builds upon children's pre-existing knowledge and interests, substantial mathematical gaps will emerge during the early elementary years and by the middle grades become a major factor in pushing students off the path to graduation. Because nearly all children enter school with the basic knowledge pre-requisites in place, mathematics has another positive attribute with regards to dropout prevention-it is an area where nearly all students can experience early academic success. This can serve as an important protective factor for students who are struggling to learn how to read, as their academic self-concept will not be dominated by these difficulties.

Transition to the Middle Grades

This is perhaps the most perilous transition. Students who make unsuccessful transitions to the middle grades, as evidenced by poor and declining attendance, behavior problems and/or course failure in the sixth grade rarely graduated in the four high -poverty cities we have examined in detail. This can be seen in the following table which shows the progression of first time sixth graders who fail math or English through a representative high-poverty urban school system.   For every 100 sixth graders who fail math or English only 11% percent graduated from the school system on time, and only 27% percent within two extra years

A Multi-Tiered Public Health Model Prevention, Intervention and Recovery System.

Middle grade schools must anticipate the many forces pulling students off the path to graduation and build a multi-tiered system of supports. First, there must be school-wide actions designed to prevent poor attendance, behavior and course failure. A student's first absence must be responded to, not their 10th. Good behavior needs to be modeled and rewarded, poor behavior consistently dealt with. At the first signs of academic trouble students must be given effective extra help. Then for students, for whom this is not enough, targeted small group or consistent but brief one on one interactions must be provided. These could be elective replacement extra help classes linked to students core courses, mentoring, anger management or grief counseling group sessions, or brief daily attendance check-ins by an adult.   If this is not enough, intensive typically one on one or one to two or three interventions are called for-tutoring, counseling, social service support. Schools need to have clear rules on what triggers movement from one level of support to the next, and when students are ready to move back to less intensive

supports. They may also benefit by partnering with external organizations like Communities in School (http://www.cisnet.org), which can help organize the integrated services students may need in the targeted and intensive support levels.

Organize the Middle Grades to Engage Students Sense of Adventure and Camaraderie

  Middle grade schools need to be organized to engage middle grade students. They need to be strong enough in this regard to offset the multiple forces pulling middle grade students away from school. This does not mean they need to embrace popular culture or even electronic devices. Some of the most engaged middle grade students-across race, class and gender- are not playing video games, they are in robotics classes, on debate teams, playing chess or writing, directing, and performing plays. In other words, they are engaged in challenging intellectual activities that often involve teammates in shared pursuits or discoveries. The middle grades need to be filled with these activities, so schooling is the most exciting place students can be. They should be strategically placed at the end of the day so students know they have to attend school and behave to participate. Communities need to realize that many truant middle grade students are not roaming the streets; they are at friend's house playing X-Box® and Nintendo®.

Engage the Whole Community in Getting Middle Grade Students to School Everyday

  In high-poverty neighborhoods the drop off in attendance between elementary and middle school can be staggering. The table below shows the percent of elementary and middle grade students missing 20 or more days of schooling by high-poverty neighborhood in a large northeastern city. In these neighborhoods, half or more of the middle grade students are missing at least a month of schooling, double and even triple the rate for elementary students.

Transition to High School

  If large numbers of students fall off the path to graduation in the middle grades, they crash during the early years of high school, in particular the ninth grade. Work by the Chicago Schools Consortium and others has shown that if students do not earn on-time promotion to the 10th grade, their odds of graduating greatly diminish. For many of these students, moreover, failure in ninth grade happens very quickly. They feel lost, scared or simply anonymous in large and often impersonal high schools. They may even miss 10 or more of the first 30 days of school, because they feel not much is going on, and no one reacts to their absences. What they do not fully appreciate is that for every quiz or assignment they miss zeroes are being recorded in grade books and when averaged with the Cs and Bs or even As they might get when they attend class the result is still an F. As a result they end up failing two or more first- quarter classes. This further signals that high school is not for them. Poor attendance and perhaps poor behavior and course failures continue and the students do not earn promotion to 10th grade. Most will attempt to repeat the 9th grade and absent additional supports will do no better. At this point they are considerably over-age and

under-credited and their educational fate is set.   This is the dynamic the transition to high school must be organized to prevent.

Transform the High Schools where Dropping Out is Common or Even the Norm into Strong Learning Institutions.

   As long as a community has one or more high schools where the number of freshmen is nearly twice as large as the number of graduates, it will have a dropout crisis. Considerable early investment in keeping students on the path to graduation will be negated if students continue to attend high schools that are organized for failure rather than success. To turn this around communities must insure that their high schools which face high degrees of educational challenge combine evidence-based comprehensive school reforms with the human resources necessary to implement and sustain these reforms. Good guidance on how to do this exists. To find it here are some places to look.- the high school reform section of the MDRC website (http://www.mdrc.org),   the National Association of Secondary School Principals (http://www.principals.org), and the education section of the Gates Foundation website (www.gatesfoundation.org/Unitedstates/Education/). There are also comprehensive whole school reform models with good evidence of success that can provide technical assistance including Talent Development, First Things First and America's Choice.

Do Whatever it Takes to Insure that All Students Earn On-time Promotion to the 10th Grade

   Social promotion does not help anyone, but repeating 9th grade is more often than not a one-way ticket to dropping out. Earning on time promotion to 10th grade is the equivalent of being able to read by second grade. It's a point in time where everything possible and then some needs to be done to accomplish it. In practical terms this means many students will need a double dose of mathematics and reading/instruction in the 9th grade (80-90 minutes a day for the whole year) but part of this instruction will need to be geared to rapidly closing skill and knowledge gaps. Beyond this, some students will need targeted extra help which will involve reduced class size. A few will need tutors and these should be provided. For some this still might not be enough and summer school or intensive first quarter courses of the following year will be needed to get them to full 10th grade status as rapidly as possible. In short, there needs to be relentless support. If one, two or even three levels of support are not enough then a fourth must be provided. It is critical that all these supports be integrated and aligned to directly provide the skills, knowledge and academic habits of mind students need to pass their courses and succeed on required assessments.

Recognize that There Are Both Academic and Social-emotional Components to Course Failure and Low Scores on Assessments.

   Students fail in high school because they lack the necessary academic skills and knowledge to succeed. They also fail because they are afraid of failing and would rather be able to say they failed because they did not try hard than that they tried very hard and still failed. By the time they reach high school students are experts at finding coping mechanisms for academic struggles. Many of these coping mechanisms, however, are counter-productive and need to be addressed in order for the students to succeed. This is another place where targeted class size

reduction can play a role. Students who continue to fail despite the provision of extra help may need classes as small as ten students so teachers are able to learn and understand their stories and the factors which stand in the way of success.
Make High School Relevant to Adulthood, Teach Adult Behaviors.

Just the early elementary grades need to be joyful, and the middle grades designed to fulfill early adolescents' need for adventure and camaraderie, the early years of high school need to be focused on building a bridge to adulthood. Many students in high poverty areas are compelled to grow up fast and assume adult responsibilities at an early age. They are not, however, given the time or supports to learn adult outlooks and behaviors like working for future goals and knowing what needs to be done to realize them. For example, there is emerging evidence that students need to earn at least B's in high school to have a good chance of succeeding in college. B or better indicates that students can do independent work of some quality. Yet too often, as Melissa Roderick and others have shown, there is a culture of passing in high school where the goal is to do enough to get by. One strategy that some high schools are using to impress upon students the need to do quality work to succeed in adulthood is to institute a B or better policy, where no major test or assignment is fully accepted until students have re-done it to earn a B. The final and initial grades are then averaged.

Involve Parents in Helping Students to Organize and Achieve Their Future.

In many ways high school is the most difficult time to achieve parental involvement yet it is vitally important.   In surveys we have taken students routinely say they work hardest for their parents. But they also state that their parents do not always know how they are doing. One strategy is to have twice a year mandatory parent-student-teacher report card and future planning conferences in which successes are celebrated, challenges identified, and solutions designed. As importantly, current school success or struggles needs to be continually linked to future outcomes and combined with post-secondary planning beginning in the 9th grade. Technology via conference calling should be used to accommodate parents work schedules. The national network of partnership schools has collected a treasure trove of good examples on how parental involvement can increased at the high school level (http://www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000)

The Final Transition-Multiple Pathways to Adult Success

Keeping students on the path to graduation through the transitions to elementary, middle, and high school leaves one more hurdle. Students need to receive a high school diploma that means something and be provided clear paths to post-secondary schooling and training. Effective recovery options also need to be provided for students who despite all of the supports provide or because of a life event or an ill-considered decision to dropout can have second chance to graduate.

Step 3-Organize a Sustained Community-Wide Campaign To End the Dropout Crisis

In communities where dropping out is common, civic action will be needed to end the dropout crisis. The school system will not be able to do it on its own. The necessary civic action will have at least four components.

Create a Community-Wide Compact to End the Dropout Crisis

One reason why the dropout crisis persists is that often no one is ultimately the steward of the necessary reforms. Superintendents and principals come and go with such frequency and/or are distracted by the crisis of the year that there is no consistent oversight and management of the long-term action needed to end the dropout crisis. A strategic plan needs to be formulated at the community level, and then the permanent institutions of the community-its businesses, institutions of higher learning, civic groups, advocacy groups, police, hospitals, social service providers and neighborhood organizations-need to take ownership of it. In short, the civic enterprises which bear the costs of the dropout crisis need to create a compact with the school system. Superintendents and principals should be enabled, empowered and provided the resources to implement the community's strategic plan and be held accountable for doing so. New superintendents and principals should be hired with the expectation that they will continue to implement the plan. The Pew Partners for Change website provides several good resources on how to organize a community-wide compact to end the dropout crisis (http://www.pew-partnership.org) as does the "Silent Epidemic" website (http://www.silentepidemic.org).

Make Sure that the Necessary Resources Flow to Strategic Needs

Ending the dropout crisis in your community will likely involve both a reallocation of existing resources and the acquisition of additional resources. In order for these resources to be wisely used and the need for additional resources minimized it will be essential that dollars flow as efficiently as possible to where they will do the most good. Of course, this is much easier said than done. Here are some ways to get started.

Provide Human Resources

Additional human resources will be needed to end the dropout crisis in your community. In order for evidence-based interventions to succeed they need to be well implemented. Every major new intervention, whether it is at the district or school level, needs an intervention manager: someone to keep the people implementing it engaged and on task, to trouble shoot and customize it to local circumstances, and to improve it based upon implementation learnings. In theory this is supposed to be the school principal but school principals can only be in so many places, doing so many things at once. Here is a good place for community resources. Business and local institutions, as part of the community compact, could provide employees with nine-month leaves, to serve as implementation managers

for key reforms (and perhaps the state and federal governments could provide tax incentives to help defray the cost).   This would provide schools with access to a larger pool of individuals with good management skills and provide the community with first-hand knowledge of how schools work and the challenges they face. These community implementation managers could work at both the school and school district levels. In many communities, school systems' research and budget offices have been hard hit by years of budget cuts, yet these are core functions required for a long-term community effort to end the dropout crisis.

This Can Be Done

The dropout crisis in your community can be stopped. The vast majority of dropouts do not want to leave high school without a diploma and even those who think they do quickly regret it. The challenge is not so much to convince students to stay in school, but to provide the continuous support they need to succeed in school. This can be accomplished by first developing a deep understanding of the nature of the dropout crisis in your community. The next step is to focus community efforts on building a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery system targeted at the key points when students fall off the path to graduation. Finally, the community must commit itself to a sustained campaign to end its dropout crisis and gather the financial and human resources it will need to succeed. One community alone can improve the lives of its citizens by ensuring that all its students graduate high school prepared for success in college, career and civic life. If all our communities work together to end this silent epidemic, we can profoundly change the nation for the better.

IV. Policy Issues in Dropout Prevention

Graduation Counts: A Report of the National Governors Association Task Force on State High School Graduation Data

Summary

America's high schools play an integral role in preparing students for college and work in the 21st century. High school success is more important than ever for the health of our economy, for civic life, and to ensure equal opportunity. Unfortunately, the equality of state high school graduation and dropout data is such that most states cannot accurately account for their students as they progress through high school. Until recently , many states had not collected both graduation and dropout data, and those that have collected these data have not generally obtained accurate information. Therefore, as education reform efforts increasingly focus on high schools, the quality of graduation and dropout data becomes even more critical.

The National Governors Association, under the leadership of NGA Chair Governor Mar. R. Warner of Virginia, convened a Task Force on State High School Graduation Data to make recommendations about how states can develop a high-quality, comparable high school graduation measure, as well as complementary indicators of student progress and outcomes and data systems capable of collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data states need. The task force members found substantial consensus on which the build their findings and recommendations.

Governors, chief state school officers, higher education executive officers, legislators, state boards of education, district officials, principals, and teachers together must lead the charge to create better systems and methods of collecting, analyzing, and reporting graduation and dropout data. Specifically, the Task Force on State High School Graduation Data makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Immediately adopt, and begin taking steps to implement, a standard four-year, adjusted cohort graduation rate using the following formula:

Graduation rate = [on-time graduates in year x]/[(first-time entering ninth graders in year x-4) + (transfers in) - (transfers out)]

Graduates are those earning high school diplomas. Students earning modified diplomas, such as a special education diploma, count as graduates if the modified diploma is the standard that the state and the school system set for the student in an individualized education plan, for example. Students earning high school credentials by passing General Educational Development (GED) tests are not considered graduates for the purpose of this definition. Students receiving a certificate of completion or other alternative to diploma, including special education students who receive a nondiploma credential, also are not graduates for this purpose. States are encouraged to include such students in complementary completion rates. Special education students and recent immigrants with limited English proficiency may need more time to complete high school diploma requirements; they may be place in different

cohorts early in high school to allow for those difficulties. To ensure the exceptions are used appropriately, states should establish guidelines and standards for schools and districts to follow. In addiction to transfers, the denominator can also subtract deceased students. Incarcerated students should be counted as transfer students as they move out of and back into the system. The graduation rate then is a measure of on-time completion, with most students, but not all, expected to finish in four years.

Recommendation 2: Build the state's data system and capacity to ensure that the system can collect, analyze, and report the adopted indicators and other important information. Ultimately, states should adopt a student-unit-record data system, with unique student identifiers that can track students through the state's education system from kindergarten through postsecondary education. Student-unit-record systems take time and money to build and bring online. In the meantime states should improve their graduation rate data immediately by providing appropriate guidelines to schools and districts on how they should collect and code data. For example, states should make it policy and standard practice that the default coding for students status is "dropout" unless it can be documented otherwise by, for example, a transcript request from a receiving school. States also should perform statistical checks and analyses and conduct on-site audits of record-keeping procedures to ensure schools and districts adhere to state data standards and guidelines.

Recommendation 3: Adopt additional, complementary indicators to provide richer context and understanding about outcomes for students and how well the system is serving them, including five- and six-year cohort graduation rates; a college-ready graduation ratel; a drop-out rate; completion rates for those earning alternative completion credentials from the state or a GED; in-grade retention rates; and percentages of students who have not graduated but are still in school or who have completed course requirements but failed a state exam required for graduation.

Recommendation 4: Develop public understanding about the need for good graduation and dropout rate data. State leaders should ensure that parents, educators, and the public understand that initially the numbers may be worse but that it is important to have an accurate picture of the problem to address it more effectively. Initially the new data on student outcomes may create frustration among many stakeholders. State leaders may need help from local education and community leaders and from communications experts about how to most effectively communicate the key messages.

Recommendation 5: Collaborate with local education leaders, high education leaders, business leaders, and leaders of local community organizations, who can help build important political and public will, and local education leaders and staff members, who play a critical role in the implementation of new data formulas.

To ensure the successful implementation of these recommendations, state leaders must reconsider existing policies that may prevent barriers; consider current data system capacity and methodology and improve them; hold schools and districts accountable for accurate data collection and reporting; and commit the necessary leadership, political will, and resources to solving the problem.

V. Resources Related to Dropout Prevention

- **References**

- **Agencies, Organizations, and Online Resources Offering Assistance related to Dropout Prevention**

- **Center Quick Finds**

- **Report from Alliance for Excellent Education --** *Progress is No Accident*

V. Resources ...

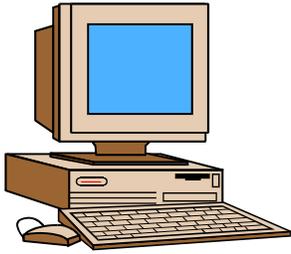## *Selected References on Dropout Prevention*
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V. Resources ...

Agencies, Organizations & Internet Resources Offering Assistance Related to Dropout Prevention

The following is a list of internet sites that offer information and resources related to dropout prevention. This list is not a comprehensive list, but is meant to highlight some premier resources and serve as a beginning for your search.

>The Alternative Schools Network (ASN) -- http://www.asnchicago.org/

> ASPIRA Association, Inc -- http://www.aspira.org.

> The Center for Employment Training (CET) -- http://www.cetweb.org

> Dropout Prevention: Priority One --http://instech.tusd.k12.az.us/Dropout.html

> Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) -- http://www.idra.org

> National Center for Education Statistics -- http://nces.ed.gov/

> National Dropout Prevention Center/Network -- http://dropoutprevention.org/

> The U.S. Dept of Education -- http://www.ed.gov/

Spotlight on:

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network
http://dropoutprevention.org/

> # What the Center has to offer:
>
> - Website contains FOCUS, a searchable database of over 600 model dropout prevention programs in urban, rural, and suburban areas at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
>
> - Website outlines effective strategies for dropout prevention.
>
> - Publishes the Journal of At-Risk Issues and the National Dropout Prevention Newsletter.
>
> - Clearinghouse and resources for current research on dropouts and dropout prevention
>
> - Provides technical assistance and professional development in the form of workshops and conferences
>
> - Online bookstore containing resources on dropout prevention

Visit the center at http://www.dropoutprevention.org/
Contact information:
Clemson University, 209 Martin Street, Clemson, SC 29631-1555,
(864) 656-2599 | ndpc@clemson.edu

V. Resources ...

Quick Find On-line Clearinghouse

The Center's Quick Find Online Clearinghouse offers a fast and convenient way to access Centert resources and to link to resources from others. **http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/quicksearch.htm**

TOPIC: *Dropout Prevention* -- **http://smhp.ucla.edu/qf/dropout.html**

TOPIC: *Engagement and Re-engagement* -- http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm

Progress Is No Accident:
Why ESEA Can't Backtrack on High School Graduation Rates

ALLIANCE FOR
EXCELLENT EDUCATION

AMERICA'S PROMISE
ALLIANCE

100

CIVIC
ENTERPRISES

EVERYONE
GRADUATES

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Acknowledgments

Introduction

The total number of students who did not graduate from high school plummeted from 1,015,946 in 2008 to 744,193 in 2012, a 27 percent reduction in just four years. Although this drastic reduction in dropouts[1] is laudable, it did not happen by accident. **The federal government put specific policies in place in 2008 and 2011 that, combined** with state and local efforts, put thousands of students on a path toward productive adulthood who otherwise may have been on a trajectory toward unemployment or incarceration. As the U.S. Congress works to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), it must continue the federal policies that are playing an essential role in turning potential high school dropouts into graduates.

Accountability and Progress

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) issued regulations[2] to address what had come to be known as the nation's *Silent Epidemic*[3]—the fact that thousands of students dropped out of high school each day, costing the nation billions in lost wages and lost potential.[4] These regulations did three things. First, they required states to use the same, accurate calculation of the high school graduation rate to prevent the extent of the dropout crisis from being obscured by each state measuring graduation rates in different and sometimes inaccurate ways.[5] Second, they required states to set ambitious graduation rate goals and rates of improvement. Third, the regulations required school districts to intervene in high schools where groups of traditionally underserved students (including students from low-income families, students of color, students with disabilities, and English language learners) had consistently low graduation rates.[6] In 2011, ED reinforced these policies by requiring states to identify and implement reform efforts among high schools with low graduation rates for the entire student body.[7]

These common-sense policy changes had a near immediate effect. From 2008 to 2012, the latest year for which comparable data is available, the national high school graduation rate rose from 74.7 percent to 80.9 percent and more than one-quarter of a million additional students received high school diplomas nationwide. Putting this into perspective, the number of nongraduates decreased during this time by more than 1,500 per school day, from 5,644 per school day in 2008 to 4,134 per school day in 2012.[8]

This is a remarkable achievement, particularly considering the lack of progress made in the years prior to the implementation of the federal graduation rate regulations. From 2001 to 2008, the number of students not graduating from high school remained stagnant at roughly 1 million students as figure 1 shows.[9]

FIGURE 1: Number of Students Not Graduating from High School in the United States Per Class
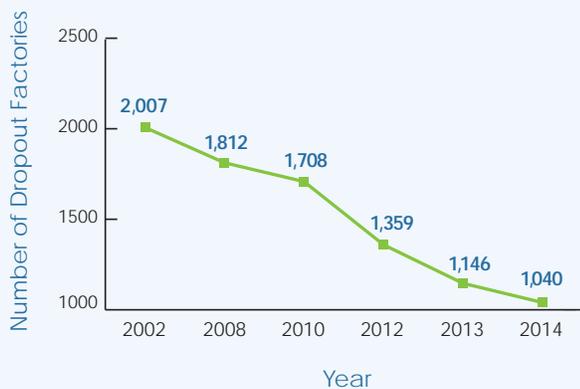
Another demonstration of progress is the dramatic decline in the number of "dropout factories," a term coined by the Everyone Graduates Center (EGC) at Johns Hopkins University. Before federal regulation standardized graduation rates, EGC employed a very simple graduation rate estimate called "promoting power," which compares the number of high school seniors in a graduating class to the number of freshmen who were in that class three years earlier. If the number of students in the class decreased by 40 percent or more by the time students went from ninth to twelfth grade, such a school had a "promoting power" of 60 percent or less and was classified as a "dropout factory."

Between 2002 and 2008, there was only modest progress in reducing the number of such high schools. But between 2008 and 2014, the number of these high schools plunged from more than 1,800 to roughly 1,000 as figure 2 shows.

FIGURE 2: Number of Dropout Factories in the United States

The fact that so many more students graduate from high school today than just a few years ago benefits both the new graduates and society as a whole. High school graduates earn $15,000 more per year than dropouts.[10] This means they are more equipped to take care of their families and purchase goods that help to fuel the nation's economy. Furthermore, if the national high school graduation rate continues to increase, the nation will realize even greater economic gains. According to an analysis by the Alliance for Excellent Education (the Alliance), increasing the national high school graduation rate to 90 percent for just one high school class would create as many as 65,700 new jobs and boost the national economy by as much as $10.9 billion.[11] The nation also would see annual increases in federal and state tax revenues of as much as $1.3 billion and $661 million, respectively.
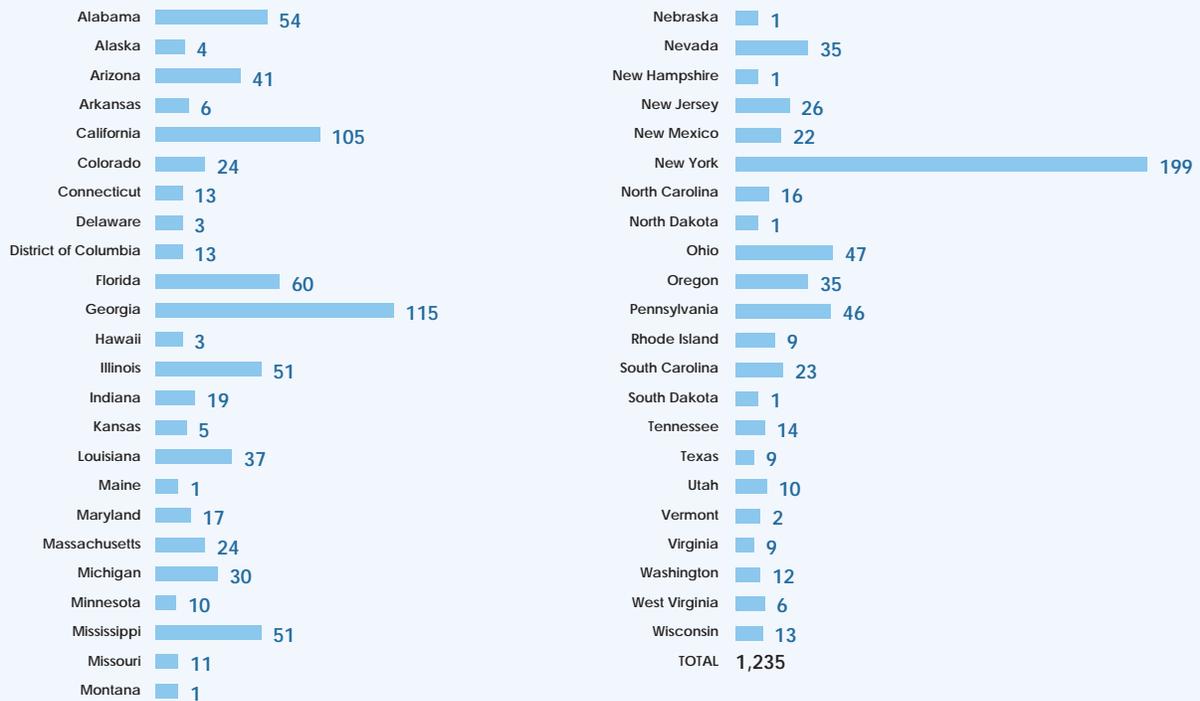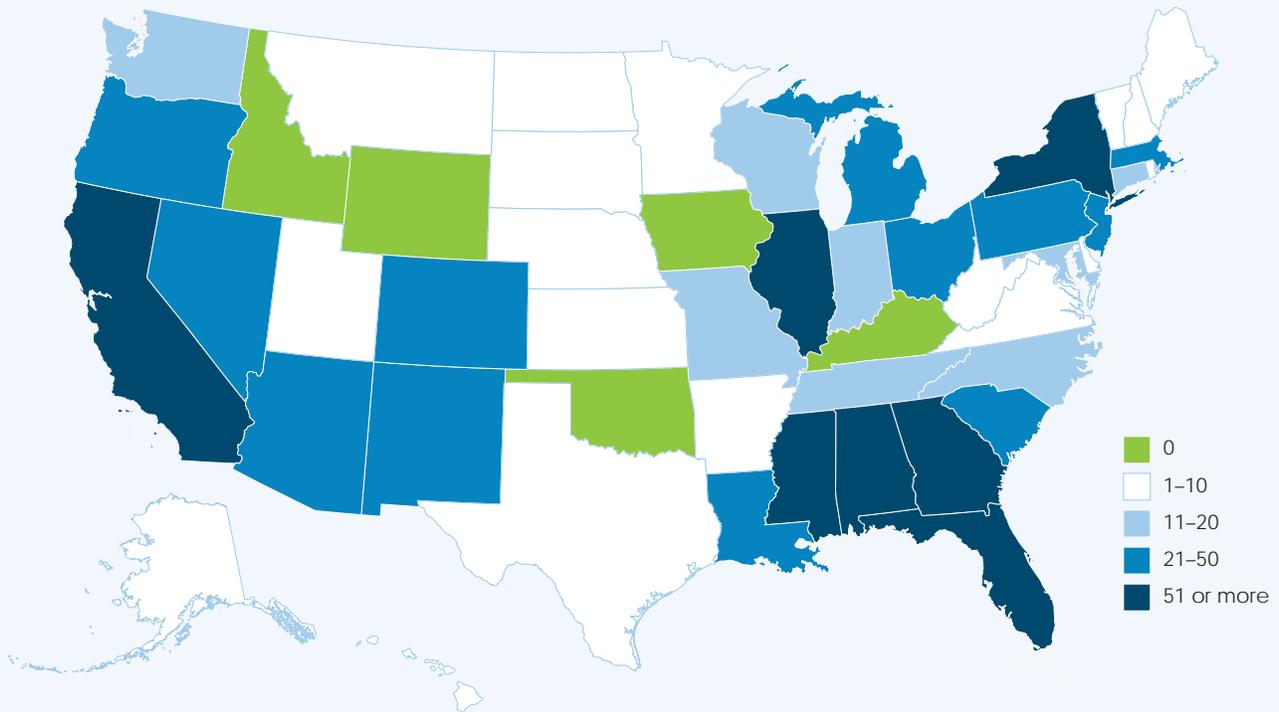
The Challenge Ahead

Remarkable progress has been made, but the number of students not graduating from high school remains unacceptably high. Only two states lost fewer than 1,000 students from the Class of 2014, while many more states lost tens of thousands. (See table 1 in the appendix for state-by-state comparisons.)

In addition, there remain 1,235 high schools nationwide that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students. (See figure 3 on the next page.) The students attending these low-graduation-rate high schools are disproportionately students of color and students from low-income families, demonstrating that separate is still not equal. For example, African American students make up less than 16 percent of the K–12 population nationwide. But in these high schools, they make up 40 percent of the student body.[12] In fact, students of color make up 90 percent or more of the student population in half of these low-graduation-rate high schools. Making matters worse, one-third of these high schools are not required to receive support from their states and are ineligible for federal school improvement grants because they do not receive federal funding for low-income students, known as Title I.[13]

Moreover, high school graduation rate gaps remain a major cause for concern. In fifteen states, the gap in high school graduation rates between African American and white students is more than 15 percentage points. The gap grew in nine states over the past four years. Twelve states, meanwhile, have a gap of 15 percentage points or more between the graduation rates of white and Latino students. This gap grew in nine states over the past four years.[14]

The nation must not continue to funnel underserved students into low-graduation-rate high schools.

FIGURE 3: Low-Graduation-Rate High Schools in the United States

Legend:
- 0
- 1–10
- 11–20
- 21–50
- 51 or more

State	Value		State	Value
Alabama	54		Nebraska	1
Alaska	4		Nevada	35
Arizona	41		New Hampshire	1
Arkansas	6		New Jersey	26
California	105		New Mexico	22
Colorado	24		New York	199
Connecticut	13		North Carolina	16
Delaware	3		North Dakota	1
District of Columbia	13		Ohio	47
Florida	60		Oregon	35
Georgia	115		Pennsylvania	46
Hawaii	3		Rhode Island	9
Illinois	51		South Carolina	23
Indiana	19		South Dakota	1
Kansas	5		Tennessee	14
Louisiana	37		Texas	9
Maine	1		Utah	10
Maryland	17		Vermont	2
Massachusetts	24		Virginia	9
Michigan	30		Washington	12
Minnesota	10		West Virginia	6
Mississippi	51		Wisconsin	13
Missouri	11		TOTAL	1,235
Montana	1			

Source: Data on the estimated number of low-graduation-rate high schools in each state based on an analysis of 2012 data conducted by the Everyone Graduates Center, School of Education, Johns Hopkins University.

Policy Recommendations

Federal accountability policy for high school graduation rates, along with state and local action, has led to a significant increase in the number of students earning high school diplomas. Unfortunately, the bills passed by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to reauthorize ESEA both backslide on graduation rate accountability. In order to continue increasing graduation rates, the reauthorization of ESEA must maintain an emphasis on low-performing high schools. Specifically, ESEA must build on the effective policies currently in place by incorporating the following recommendations:

1. All high schools that fail to graduate one-third or more of their students must be included in state accountability systems and be eligible for federal school improvement funding, regardless of whether they receive support from Title I. Such schools must receive support to implement evidence-based, comprehensive reform. (For additional details about how ESEA can support low-graduation-rate high schools, see the Alliance's publication *Below the Surface: Solving the Hidden Graduation Rate Crisis*.)

2. Any high school with a group of traditionally underserved students that does not meet a state-set graduation rate goal for two or more years must implement evidence-based, targeted intervention. (For additional information about ways ESEA can support traditionally underserved students, see the Alliance's publication *Equity and ESEA: Holding High Schools Accountable for Traditionally Underserved Students*.)

Conclusion

Federal education policy targeted at improving high school graduation rates is working. Today, far more young people graduate from high school because federal policy (1) holds states and schools accountable for improving high school graduation rates and (2) prioritizes reform among low-performing high schools. As Congress reauthorizes ESEA, it must seize the opportunity to put even more young people on the path toward a diploma.

In order to continue increasing graduation rates, the reauthorization of ESEA must maintain an emphasis on low-performing high schools.

Endnotes

1 In this report, the term "dropout" refers to the number of nongraduates as calculated using the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate reported by ED.

2 ED issued the graduation rate regulation on October 29, 2008. States were required to implement the regulation for reporting purposes no later than School Year (SY) 2010–11 and for accountability purposes by SY 2011–12.

3 J. Bridgeland, J. DiIulio, and K. Morrison, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts* (Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises, 2006).

4 Alliance for Excellent Education, "The High Cost of High School Dropouts: What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools," (Washington, DC: Author 2011).

5 The 2008 regulation requires states to use the four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR). This calculation measures the percentage of students who graduate in four years by dividing the number of students in a class that earn a regular high school diploma by the number of first-time ninth graders that made up that class of students three years earlier, adjusting for students who transferred or died. The Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) estimates the four-year graduation rate by dividing the number of diplomas awarded in a single year to students who may have taken any number of years to earn a regular diploma by an estimate of the number of first-time ninth graders three years prior. That estimate is derived by taking the average size of the eighth-grade, ninth-grade, and tenth-grade student classes. The ACGR is the most accurate calculation of the graduation rate because it follows individual students from ninth grade to twelfth grade. States were required to use the ACGR no later than SY 2010–11; therefore, trend data starting in 2008 is not available for the ACGR. Trend data starting in 2008 is available for the AFGR. Therefore, this report utilizes the AFGR when referencing trends in data since 2008. This report uses the ACGR elsewhere in the report because it is a more accurate measure of the graduation rate.

6 34 C.F.R. 200.19(b)(1)

7 ED's 2011 requirements apply to the forty-four states that have waivers from ESEA that grant those states flexibility from certain requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act, the current version of the law. Specifically, states must classify high schools that receive Title I funding and that have a graduation rate below 60 percent as "priority" schools, and implement comprehensive reform, or classify them as "focus" schools and implement targeted interventions.

8 Data about the national high school graduation rate and number of nongraduates obtained from the U.S. Department of Education, "NCES Common Core of Data State Dropout and Graduation Rate Data File," SY 2013–14 Preliminary Version 1a, SY 2012–13 1a, SY 2011–12 1a, SY 2010–11 2a, SY 2009–10 2a, SY 2008–09 1b, SY 2007–08 1b, SY 2002–03 1a, SY 2001–02 1a, SY 2000–01 1a, SY 1999–00 1b, SY 1998–99 1c.

9 Between SY 2001–02 and SY 2007–08, the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate increased a modest 2.1 percentage points, from 72.6 percent to 74.7 percent. The number of students who did not receive a diploma—990,460 in SY 2001–02 and 1,015,946 in SY 2007–08—was largely unchanged because of an increase in the number of incoming ninth graders during this time.

10 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment 2012 and Projected 2022, by Typical Entry-Level Education and Training Assignment," http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_education_summary.htm (accessed October 16, 2015).

11 Alliance for Excellent Education, "New Economic Analysis Links Increased Educational Attainment to Economic Growth in 200+ Metro Areas," press release, October 15, 2013, http://all4ed.org/press/new-economic-analysis-links-increased-educational-attainment-to-economic-growth-in-200-metro-areas/ (accessed October 16, 2015).

12 J. Cardichon and P. Lovell, *Below the Surface: Solving the Hidden Graduation Rate Crisis* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2015), http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/BelowTheSurface.pdf (accessed October 13, 2015).

13 Federal requirements for state accountability policy apply only to schools that receive Title I funding for students from low-income families. For a complete discussion of the impact of Title I policy on high schools, see W. Riddle, "Title I and High Schools: Addressing the Needs of Disadvantaged Students at All Grade Levels," (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011), http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/TitleIandHSs.pdf (accessed September 28, 2015).

14 Data used to calculate the gaps in high school graduation rates obtained from the U.S. Department of Education "ED Data Express" website, http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-tables-main.cfm (accessed October 22, 2015).

Appendix

TABLE 1: Nongraduates in the United States (2014)

State	Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate	Estimated Cohort Size	Estimated Total Number of Nongraduates	Estimated Number of Nongraduates Per School Day
Alabama	86.3%	54,125	7,404	41
Alaska	71.1%	9,871	2,849	16
Arizona	75.7%	79,213	19,288	107
Arkansas	86.9%	34,422	4,496	25
California	81.0%	432,850	82,242	457
Colorado	77.3%	61,440	13,953	78
Connecticut	87.0%	43,050	5,584	31
Delaware	87.0%	9,423	1,230	7
District of Columbia	61.4%	5,101	1,972	11
Florida	76.1%	196,234	46,841	260
Georgia	72.5%	121,593	33,438	186
Hawaii	81.8%	13,062	2,379	13
Idaho	77.3%	22,843	5,192	29
Illinois	86.0%	153,112	21,374	119
Indiana	87.9%	75,858	9,202	51
Iowa	90.5%	33,918	3,209	18
Kansas	85.7%	35,290	5,054	28
Kentucky	87.5%	47,355	5,919	33
Louisiana	74.6%	47,554	12,079	67
Maine	86.5%	13,178	1,780	10
Maryland	86.4%	64,897	8,832	49
Massachusetts	86.1%	73,257	10,183	57
Michigan	78.6%	122,269	26,190	146
Minnesota	81.2%	65,053	12,249	68

(continued)

Note: The estimated number of nongraduates per school day is based on the estimated total number of nongraduates in the cohort divided by 180 school days.

State	Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate	Estimated Cohort Size	Estimated Total Number of Nongraduates	Estimated Number of Nongraduates Per School Day
Mississippi	77.6%	32,988	7,393	41
Missouri	87.3%	65,327	8,310	46
Montana	85.4%	10,855	1,582	9
Nebraska	89.7%	21,806	2,250	13
Nevada	70.0%	32,889	9,867	55
New Hampshire	88.1%	15,193	1,813	10
New Jersey	88.6%	105,650	12,044	67
New Mexico	68.5%	24,235	7,624	42
New York	77.8%	218,181	48,349	269
North Carolina	83.9%	109,132	17,570	98
North Dakota	87.2%	7,550	964	5
Ohio	81.8%	138,098	25,148	140
Oklahoma	82.7%	43,821	7,577	42
Oregon	72.0%	45,142	12,649	70
Pennsylvania	85.5%	139,204	20,185	112
Rhode Island	80.8%	11,333	2,182	12
South Carolina	80.1%	50,897	10,154	56
South Dakota	82.7%	9,256	1,598	9
Tennessee	87.2%	69,503	8,882	49
Texas	88.3%	330,453	38,663	215
Utah	83.9%	42,580	6,868	38
Vermont	87.8%	6,206	756	4
Virginia	85.3%	94,447	13,893	77
Washington	78.2%	74,864	16,350	91
West Virginia	84.5%	19,793	3,074	17
Wisconsin	88.6%	66,098	7,509	42
Wyoming	78.6%	6,906	1,477	8