Dropout to Graduation
Transforming Pathways for Youth with Disabilities
Predictable Pathway

In Context
- One high school student drops out every 26 seconds
- On average, youth with disabilities drop out at significantly higher rates than youth without disabilities
- Youth with learning disabilities and emotional disturbances are at greater risk of dropping out of school as compared to their peers.
What’s Astounding

Elementary Years

• Difference exist between graduates and dropouts as early as Kindergarten

• Researchers have identified signs of leaving as early as first grade

• Early signs of Aggression may suggest problems later on
Moving to Third Grade

Elementary Years

• Dropouts can be distinguished from graduates with a 66% accuracy using attendance rates alone.
Effects of Retention

Elementary Years

• Students held back as early as K–4th grade are five times more likely to dropout.

Warning
Middle School Predictors

Middle School Years

Predictors of Dropout
- Poor Attendance
- Poor Behavior
- Failing Math
- Failing English
School Attendance

Middle School Years

• Students must be present and engaged in order to learn

• Only 14% of students who attend school regularly will graduate on time
Bad Attitude Equals Bad News

Middle School Years

- Students with bad behavior records have a 17% chance of graduating on time.

- Low or failing marks in discipline or behavior are primary indicators of dropouts.
Middle School Years

- Sixth graders who fail English or Math have a 10% chance of graduating on time or a 20% chance of graduating late.
Effects of Retention

- Students who repeat middle school are 11 times more likely to dropout
Moving Into High School

High School Years

Predictors of Dropout

- 9th Grade Retention
- Too many absences
- Insufficient credits
- Failing core subjects
- Low scores on assessment tests
- Disengagement in school
Ninth Grade the Make or Break Year

High School Years

- Students who fail the ninth grade more than once only have a 50/50 chance of graduation.
A Discouraging Trend

High School Years
Emerging Trends in grades 11 and 12 that lead to dropping out

• Loss of credits
• Disciplinary action
• Low scores on High Stakes Testing
Dropout

High School Years

Dropping out:

- Is complex
- Does not happen overnight
- Poses an even greater risk for students with disabilities
- Is predictable
- Does not have to be the final verdict for at-risk students.
Keeping Students on the Graduation Path

Actions We Can Take

• Increase school attendance
• Teach Problem Solving and appropriate social skills
• Provide effective instruction to teach career and academic skills
Diagnostic Interventions

**Actions We can Take**

- Develop early warning systems
  - Identify students at risk of dropping out.
  - Identify incoming students with histories of multiple risk indicators
- Monitor students sense of engagement
- Collect and document accurate information on student withdrawals
Create a Supportive School Climate

**Actions We Can Take**

- High expectations for learning and support for all students
- Caring and supportive teachers
- Positive adult-adult relationships between/among teachers, staff, and administrators
- Students feel safe and are actively involved in co-curricula and extra-curricula activities
Assign Caring Adult Advocates

Programs don’t change kids-relationships do. Every child needs one adult who’s irrationally committed to his or her future”

Bill Milliken (2007) - The Last Dropout
Encourage Parental Involvement

Actions We Can Take

Encourage parental involvement by:

- Offering a wide variety of ways to participate
- Supporting family participation in any school or community opportunity
- Accounting for cultural and individual differences
- Enabling participation for all who want to contribute, regardless of skill level
- Providing support to improve participation skills.
Graduate, Yes We Can!

Final Thoughts

• Intervene early and often
• Concentrate on first symptoms of dropping out
• Use proven Practices
• Consider graduation as the only acceptable outcome!!