Systemic Renewal: Using Data to Identify Dropout-Related Needs

Regional Dropout Prevention Training
Day 2

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Purpose

To provide district- and school-level personnel with foundational information about the use of data in dropout prevention efforts
Module Focus

- The importance of data in educational decision making
- The basic factors that affect data quality
- Strategies to improve the quality of data
- Basic measures correlated with dropout
- Policies and practices that affect high-school completion
- Indicators of risk
How Data Can Help

- Some data can be used as indicators of dropout risk
- By analyzing these data and noting patterns, we can identify areas of risk and need
- Once the needs are known, we can target them with appropriate programs or interventions
Why Do You Need Good Data?

Many states’ graduation and dropout data are not of adequate reliability to let them track their students through high school.

National Governors Association
Graduation Counts
Once You Have the Data

★ Get your money’s worth from it!
★ Districts have data, but don’t get the most from it
  ★ 83% of districts and 88% of schools use data on academic performance for program evaluation
  ★ Only 53% of districts and 49% of schools use the same data in planning professional development (SLIDEA 2004 Report)

★ 85% of districts and 86% of schools use graduation and dropout data for program evaluation
★ Only 30% of districts and schools use the data for planning professional development (SLIDEA 2004 Report)
Getting at the Root Cause
District Administrators

Identifying schools

★ Look at the indicator data for schools in your school division
★ Identify broad areas of need in the schools
★ Dig deeper to identify specific issues and identify possible solutions
★ Direct technical assistance to those schools based on what you’ve learned
District and Local Administrators

Drilling down within a school
★ Look beyond the basic Indicator data at more detailed information about your school, the community and the kids
★ Identify specific areas of need for
★ Match these with suitable interventions
★ Implement the interventions
Going Deeper

- Graduation rates and Dropout rates
- Academic achievement – assessment data
- Course-completion data
- Discipline rates (Suspension/expulsion)
- Attendance rates
- Retention rates
- Parental factors (involvement, etc.)
- Secondary transition data
- Post-school outcomes
- School climate
- Policies and procedures
- Staff development
Signs of Disengagement

★ Low motivation – dislike of school
★ Low rates of responding in class
★ Absenteeism – absent >10 days per year
★ Poor academic performance – failed 3-5 classes
★ Insufficient credit accrual
★ Poor performance on high-stakes tests
★ Grade retention – retained one or more years
★ Behavior issues – 5 to 9 disciplinary referrals
★ Little or no participation in school activities
Look for signs in the data available to you!
Using Data to Guide Improvement
Steps 1 & 2: Identify Objectives & Define Questions

★ Why are you doing this?
★ What problem(s) do you want to address?
★ What do you hope to learn/accomplish?
Identifying Needs to Begin Developing an Intervention Plan

1. Identify your objectives
2. Define the important questions to answer
3. Determine the type of data you need
4. Collect the data (or find existing sources)
5. Conduct needs analysis and interpret results
6. Use the results to guide development of an intervention plan... (more about this later)

Keep the focus on alterable variables!

★ Also, don’t forget program evaluation – document your efforts and success
Step 3: Decide What Data You Will Need

★ It will depend on the questions you want to answer!

★ To answer questions about what’s contributing to dropout in your district or school, you will need to examine a subset of the OSEP indicators (the 7 mentioned earlier) plus a few more pieces of information.
Step 4: Getting the Data

★ Your school or district data manager
★ Your school’s guidance office/graduation specialist
★ Your district/school policies and procedures
★ The state department of education’s website
★ The IDEA website (www.ideadata.org)
★ Collect it
Step 5: Data-Based Needs Analysis

- Explore the data
- Determine whether performance targets were met
- Look for trends and patterns in the data
- Look for connections
- Identify causes
Step 5: Data-Based Needs Analysis

★ Have the right data? Verify that you have the data you need.

★ Have good data? Do the data appear to be reliable and correct?

★ Have enough data? Use as much of the data as you can get your hands on... Having multiple years worth of data will let you spot any patterns.

★ Are there trends? Connect the dots... Graphing data often makes it easier to spot trends over time.
Step 5: Data-Based Needs Analysis

For Each Indicator

★ Examine the data and answer the question, “Did the school meet its performance target or the threshold criterion”?

★ If a target was missed, was it a near miss or seriously missed?

★ If no targets exist, compare your data to other LEAs, SEAs, other years in your school or district… get yourself a reference point!
Step 5: Data-Based Needs Analysis

- Identify any trends in the data over time
  - Which targets were made/missed last year?
  - How about the year before?
    - Are things getting better or worse?
- See what patterns the data show among the schools in the district
- Look for patterns among classes and students at the school level
- You will use any trends and patterns you see to focus TA efforts
Step 6: Preparing to Develop an Intervention Plan

Guiding Questions - What Did You Learn?

★ Is the school meeting its students’ needs?
★ Does the curriculum address areas of weakness?
★ Are policies or procedures causing problems?
★ Are there resource needs?
★ Are there staff training needs?
★ What other needs did you discover?
Step 6: Develop an Intervention Plan

- Prioritize the needs you’ve discovered
- Choose the most pressing two or three to address
- Don’t try to address everything at once!
- Use the results of your analysis to identify and select a program that will address the needs you’ve discovered
  - Commercially available programs/interventions
  - Other evidence-based activities that can be implemented locally without great cost
Step 6: Develop an Intervention Plan

Guiding Questions:

★ Are there already programs or interventions in place that address any of the needs?
  ★ How are these working?

★ Are there people in your school or district who have experience addressing these needs?

★ More about this later (Module 6: the NDPC-SD School Intervention Framework)
School-Level Data to Review
Guiding Questions: Graduation Rates

★ What percentage of all students (including SWD) graduated from your school?

★ What percentage of students with disabilities graduated from your school?

★ Do the math. Is there a disparity—a graduation gap—in your school?

★ What is the trend in graduation rates for your school over the last 3 years?

★ What types of diplomas are offered in your school? Are they all “standard diplomas”?
Guiding Questions: Dropout Rates

★ What percentage of all students (including SWD) dropped out?

★ What percentage of students with disabilities dropped out?

★ How were these rates calculated?
  ★ Event rate, Status rate, Cohort rate

★ Is there a disparity—a dropout gap—in your school?

★ Does the school have a dropout prevention initiative

★ Did the school meet its targeted dropout rate?
Activity 1A

Break into small groups

★ Read the prompts and discuss how your school performed on the graduation and dropout indicators

5 minutes
Guiding Questions: Academics

★ Assessment data
★ What percentage of your students passed the 8th grade state Math test? … the 8th grade English test?
★ How about the high school graduation assessments?
★ Are test data consistent between all students and students with disabilities?
★ What academic needs do diagnostic tests show?

★ Student Grades
★ How are students’ academic grades in your school?
★ Are patterns apparent within grades?
★ Are there patterns or trends from grade to grade?
Guiding Questions: Course-Completion Rates

★ What are the course-completion rates for core classes?
★ Do there appear to be “problem” classes?
★ Are Sp Ed students accruing academic credits at comparable rates to their non-disabled peers?
★ What % of seniors didn’t earn enough credits to graduate last year?
★ Are students able to take courses when they need them?
★ Are credit requirements impacting students’ ability to graduate in 4 years?
★ If so, is there disparate impact between Gen Ed and Special Ed students?
Activity 1B

Break into small groups

★ Read the prompts for academics and discuss how your school performed.

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5 minutes
Guiding Questions: Discipline

★ How many office referrals were there last year?
★ What percentage of students received one or more office referrals?
★ What percentage of students received in-school suspensions?
★ What percentage of students received out-of-school suspensions?
★ What percentage of students were expelled?
★ Are the data consistent between all students and students with disabilities?
Guiding Questions: Behavior Supports

★ Does your school have behavior supports in place?

★ Does every E/BD student in the district or school have a behavior support plan?

★ Are behavior support plans based on a functional behavior assessment (FBA)?

★ Who conducts the FBAs?
Guiding Questions: Attendance

★ What is the attendance rate for each grade? 
   (absence of >10 to 18% of the instructional time indicates a serious risk of dropping out)

★ Have these rates changed over time?

★ What are your district or school attendance-rate targets?

★ Does your district or school have a program to boost attendance? Does it include incentives for good attendance?
Guiding Questions: Grade Retention

★ What was the retention rate per grade?

★ Are there particular grades, classrooms, or groups of students that have higher retention rates than others?

★ What percent of high school students have been retained one grade?

★ What percent of high school students have been retained two or more grades?
Activity 1C

Break into small groups

★ Read the prompts for discipline, behavior, attendance, and retention and discuss how your school performed.

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5 minutes
Guiding Questions: Parental Factors

★ What percentage of parents participate and interact with the school?
  ★ Attend IEP meetings
  ★ Attend parent-teacher conferences
  ★ Help with extracurricular activities
  ★ Expect and push their child to graduate

★ Level of parents’ education
  ★ Dropout is a family tradition
  ★ So is school completion though!

★ What is being done to get parents involved in school and their kids’ education?
Guiding Questions: School Climate

★ Is there a safe-school initiative in place?
★ Does your district or school use a school climate measure of any kind?
★ If so, what are the latest results?
★ Do students, parents and staff generally perceive the school as a safe and welcoming environment?
Guiding Questions: Extracurricular Activities

★ Is there a good variety of extracurricular activities for students?

★ Are these activities available to all students?

★ Do students widely participate in these activities?

★ What are the greatest barriers to student participation in activities?
Activity 1D

Break into small groups

* Read the prompts for parental factors, school climate and extracurricular activities. Discuss how these factors are operating in your school.

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5 minutes
Guiding Questions: Secondary Transition

★ Does the school have one or more staff members dedicated (full-time) to transition planning?
★ Does every child with an IEP who is 16 or older have a transition plan?
★ Do the transition plans contain measurable post-secondary goals?
★ Do transition planning efforts include family involvement (family training & empowerment)
★ Do transition planning efforts include community involvement?
Guiding Questions: Post-School Outcomes

★ Does the school collect PSO information prior to a student’s exit (e.g., contact information, demographic data, completion status)? What methods are used?

★ How are post-school outcomes data collected (one year out)?

★ Has the school investigated or defined post-school training and employment variables?

★ Has the school identified other variables (i.e. independent living and social adjustment-related) that might be helpful in program improvement?
Guiding Questions:
Professional Development

★ Does the state, district, or school have a policy that mandates teachers become “highly qualified”?

★ Are general education teachers provided sufficient professional learning to instruct students with IEPs adequately?

★ Are professional development activities and materials tailored to students’ academic or other needs?

★ Do your district and school use educational data in planning professional development?
Activity 1E

Break into small groups

★ Read the prompts for transition, post-school outcomes and professional development. Discuss how they relate to your school.

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5 minutes
Guiding Questions: Policies and Procedures

★ What priority does dropout receive in the district or school?
★ Are there written policies or procedures that deal with dropout prevention?
★ Are particular students or groups at risk because of any policies or procedures?
★ Is there a dropout-prevention program?
  ★ Is it available to all students?
Activity 2

Break into small groups

★ Read the prompts for policies and procedures. Discuss the policies and procedures that impact school completion in your school.

THEN….
Activity 2 – continued

- List a few policies or procedures in your district/school that help support dropout prevention.
- Why do these help?
- List a few policies or procedures that may hinder dropout prevention.
- Why might these hurt the effort?
Report Out!
Specific Factors

Review and, as needed, revise your school’s dropout-related policies and procedures on:

- Attendance
- Discipline: suspension/expulsion/office referrals
- Grade retention
- Definition of a dropout and graduate
- Diploma options
- Exit codes (E.g., moved, not known to be continuing)
- Maintaining/transferring student records
Next Steps
Putting It Together

- Identify a core team of people from your school to help and continue this exercise at home.

- Gather the data you need, examine it, and start looking for patterns and their connections to dropout.

- Work together and identify areas of need as well as areas of strength.
Putting It Together

As a team, review and expand your answers to each of the probes.

How did your school perform in each category?

Do you see patterns of good or poor performance across categories?

Keep track of any patterns you find—both strengths and weaknesses.
Putting It Together

Are there similarities among the areas in which the school didn’t make the target/criteria?

For example: did the school miss its discipline, retention, and attendance goals?

For example: did the school miss its targets for AYP, have low pass rates on EOC tests, and have generally low scores on diagnostic math tests?
Putting It Together

★ Once you’ve identified the related areas, try to prioritize them.

★ Which one(s) are most immediate and critical?

★ Which ones can be addressed with the resources available to you?

★ Remember that you probably can’t address everything at once… Don’t try! Set practical goals: pick two or three issues to address at first.
Homework

- Continue this data-driven process with your team and identify problem areas in your district/school
- Hypothesize the causes
- See what, if anything, is currently being done to address them