'Back to Basics: The Fundamentals of Dropout Prevention'

Using What Works in Dropout Prevention

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Regional Dropout Prevention Institute
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Choices Are
NEVER
This Obvious

Drop Out of School

Stay In School
Understanding Our Challenge:

Delivering secondary educational opportunities that keep youth in school while preparing them for a productive adulthood
Dropout is a Predictable Process of Life course Disengagement

• Not an isolated event
  • Elementary years, process begins
    • Aggression - 1st grade teachers
    • Attendance - third grade
    • School performance (behavior, attendance, academics) during the elementary years
  • K – 4th Retention (five times more likely to drop out of school)
Middle School Predictors

(Balfanz & Herzog, 2005; 2006)

1. The four strongest predictors – determined by the end of sixth grade
   1. Poor attendance
   2. Poor behavior
   3. Failing math
   4. Failing English

2. Sixth graders who do not attend school regularly, receive poor behavior marks, or fail math or English
   - 10% chance of graduating on time
   - 20% chance of graduating a year late

(Balfanz & Herzog, 2005; 2006)
High School Predictors of Dropout

- Over age
- Too many absences
- Declined parent involvement
- Ninth grade retention

(Allensworth & Easton (2007); Balfanz & Herzog, 2006)
High School Predictors of Dropout

- Algebra
- English
- History
- Science
- Loss of Credits
- ODRS
- ISS
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Discipline
- End Course
- State Assessment
- Graduation Tests
- High Stakes Testing

(Allensworth & Easton (2007):
Balfanz & Herzog (2006)
What Influences Dropout?

- Student Influences
- School Influences
- Family Influences
- Community Influences
Schools factors that influence Dropout

- School policies & procedures
- Structure & class assignment
- Course content & instruction
- Climate & relationships
Family Factors that Influence School Dropout

- Poverty Level
- Education
- Language and literacy
- Level of involvement
- Expectations
- Abuse
- Mobility
Students Factors that Influence Dropout

- Attendance
- Behavior, Discipline
- Academic performance
- Boredom, relevance & rigor
- Resiliency (self esteem, persistence, self determination, motivation)
- Relationships
- Life Events (high risk behaviors)
Community Factors that influence Dropout

- Violence, Gangs, Discrimination, Crime, Drugs
- Employment, Resources, Health Care
- Level of support for school
What We will cover

• Discuss six evidence based recommendations from IES practice guide and other critical factors influencing school completion

• A Dropout Prevention Framework to guide improvement planning and implementation
 Dropout Prevention Practice Guide

The Authors

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Jeremy Finn: State University of New York—Buffalo

Russell Rumberger: University of California—Santa Barbara

Jay Smink: National Dropout Prevention Center/Network
Recommendations: 3 Categories

• *Diagnostic processes* for identifying student-level and schoolwide dropout problems (Rec. 1)

• *Targeted interventions* for a subset of middle and high school students who are identified as at risk of dropping out (Recs. 2, 3, & 4)

• *Schoolwide reforms* designed to enhance engagement (Recs. 5 & 6)
Interventions That Work

**Diagnostic**
- Comprehensive systems
- Unique IDs

**Targeted**
- Adult advocates
- Academic support
- Classroom and social skills

**School wide**
- Personalized learning and instruction
- Rigorous and relevant instruction
Diagnostic

- Develop comprehensive data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out.
- Use data to help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.
Establish Early Warning Systems

- Use longitudinal, student level data to get an accurate read on graduation and dropout rates.

- Use data to identify incoming students with histories of academic problems, truancy, behavior problems, and retention.

- Collect and document accurate information on student withdrawals.
Establish Early Warning Systems

- Monitor the academic and social performance of students continually
- Review student level data to identify students at risk of dropping out.
- Monitor students sense of engagement and belonging in school.
High Yield Indicators

**Engagement**
- Attendance
- Behavior

**Course Performance**
- General course performance
- Course performance in core courses
- Number of credits earned

Research from several U.S. school districts provides a strong foundation for defining early warning signs that students might drop out, but local adaptation is key.

Allensworth & Easton (2007)
Diagnostic

Roadblock

• A huge volume of data compounded by outdated, slow data systems & inefficient procedures

• Data sharing issues

Solutions

• New real-time, longitudinal data systems are available that support disaggregation and data sharing.

• Centralize data collection & dissemination at the district level; revise district policies & procedures to help foster this sharing
Diagnostic

Road block

• Inadequate/inaccurate exit codes yield useless data.

• More burden may be placed on staff.

Solutions

• Improve coding to give a true picture of exiting

• Automate data system checks and early warning systems as much as possible via the data system

• Institute a team to examine data from various sources
Targeted Interventions

- Caring Adult Advocate
- Academic Support
- Behavior and Social Skills
Assign an adult advocate

- Choose committed adults and provide training
- Establish regular meeting times
- Communicate potential obstacles
Adult Advocates

Roadblocks

• School schedules don’t allow time to meet with advocates.

• It’s hard to find staff interested in participating.

• Staff Resistance
• Student Resistance

Solutions

• Rearrange school schedule; hold meetings during existing breaks in the school day

• Seek Volunteer, partner with community organizations

• Role clarification
• Building and maintaining trusting relationships
Provide Academic support and enrichment

- Individual support / tutoring
- Small group instruction for note-taking and study skills
- Extra learning time and Credit Recovery
- Intensive in school and out of school programs
Academic Support & Enrichment

**Roadblocks**

- Not enough time in the school day to add more academic programs
- Students don’t want to participate outside of scheduled classes.

**Solutions**

- Offer enrichment activities at different times from core classes; offer as electives; offer after-school or summer programs
- Make these activities part of the regular class schedule
Academic Support & Enrichment

Road blocks
• It’s hard finding tutors who are good and motivated.

Solutions
• Recruit interested school staff, parents and/or business volunteers
• Establish partnerships with community organizations and postsecondary institutions
• Seek supplemental services under NCLB for eligible at-risk students
Implement programs to improve classroom behavior and social skills

Academic & Behavior Mentors

Frequent positive rewards and recognition

Problem solving and relationship building strategies
Improve classroom behavior and social skills

Roadblocks

• Limited resources available for social skills classes.

• Stereotyping at-risk students as “kids beyond help

Solutions

• Teachers can model positive communications with students every day and incorporate positive examples of such skills into any curricular area

• Provide professional development around building good classroom behavior and social skills for all students
School-wide Interventions
Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.

Small Learning Communities • Team Teaching • Smaller Classes • Extended Learning Time • Career Academies, Career Technical Education • Extra Curricula Activities
Supportive School Supportive Climate

A Welcome School Climate + Caring and Supportive teachers = Increased school Completion
Personalized learning and Instruction

Road blocks

• Staff may resist restructuring of the school

• Turnover of key staff can impede/reverse progress

Solutions

• Strong, steady leadership

• Professional development and collaborative planning

• Provide opportunity to transfer

• Solicit principal and staff input before implementing restructuring will reduce resistance

• Develop realistic timelines for implementation
Provide rigorous and relevant instruction

- Keep students engaged with learning
- Integrate content with career skills
- Provide skills needed to graduate
- Help students experience success
Rigorous & Relevant Instruction

**Road blocks**

- Resistance to integrating CTE into academic curricula
- State standards and college admission requirements discourage integration of academic and career and technical education

**Solutions**

- Provide professional development on smooth integration of academic content with career-related info
- Relevant career examples and academic courses that cover the expected content can be integrated into traditional course content, titles, and descriptions.
Rigorous & Relevant Instruction

**Road blocks**

- Students lack interest in attending college

**Solutions**

- Stress the connection between academics and professional success
- Have students visit colleges and interact with their students & staff
### Potentially Effective Interventions for Dropout Prevention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WWC-rated interventions showing positive or potentially positive effects</th>
<th>1. Data analysis</th>
<th>2. Adult advocate</th>
<th>3. Academic support</th>
<th>4. Classroom behavior and social skills</th>
<th>5. Personalized learning environment</th>
<th>6. Help students discover purpose</th>
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<td>Achievement for Latinos with Academic Success (ALAS)</td>
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<td>High School Redirection</td>
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<td>Talent Development</td>
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<td>Talent Search</td>
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<td>Twelve Together</td>
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**Note:** Dark green represents key characteristics of a program and pale shading represents non-key characteristics.
# Interventions with No Detectable Effects on Dropout

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<td>Middle College High School</td>
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<td>Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams)</td>
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<td>Quantum Opportunity Program</td>
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<th>Other interventions that did not meet WWC standards or did not evaluate outcomes related to dropping out</th>
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<td>Keepin’ It Real</td>
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<td>Responding in Peaceful and Positive (RIPP) Ways</td>
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<td>Too Good For Violence (TGFV)</td>
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What Works - In Review

• Use system and student data to learn about your school and students
  – How many dropout, who are they, when do they drop out, why do they drop out?
• Use targeted interventions to keep at-risk students engaged in the learning process and the school community at large
• Use schoolwide measures to make school as engaging, relevant, interesting, enjoyable and useful to students as possible
Parting Notes

• First, determine your school’s specific needs.
• Initiation of targeted, schoolwide, and long-term strategies should include a plan to ensure high-quality implementation of the strategies.
• High quality implementation of the strategies, individually and as part of a larger, comprehensive plan, will require investments in professional development for staff, not only to promote staff skills but also, where necessary, to change staff behaviors and attitudes.
Other critical factors

- Parental engagement and involvement
- Policy review/revision
- Professional development
Parental Involvement promotes school completion

- Provide assistance and support for homework
- Reinforce the relevance of school
- Remain involved throughout high school
- Encourage and celebrate success
Cultivating family involvement

Strategies:

• Offer a wide variety of ways to participate
• Support participation in any school or community opportunity
• Account for cultural and individual differences
• Enable participation regardless of skill level
• Provide support to improve participation skills
Cultivating family involvement

Strategies:

• Meeting schedules that accommodate family needs
• Staff development on welcoming and working collaboratively with families and students
• Supports and materials that positively reflect diversity
• Regular home and school communication (as an expectation)
• Referrals to community resources
Professional Development Matters

- Highly Qualified and skilled workforce
- Linked to student needs
- Focus on what works
- Building and sustaining professional learning communities
- Student empowerment
Some policies can have unintended consequences that impact school completion

Attendance

Discipline

Course Accrual

Graduation requirements

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