

Approaches to Dropout Prevention:
 Heeding Early Warning Signs with Appropriate Interventions
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- 1.3 million students did not graduate in US (2004)- Cost more than \$325 Billion in lost wages, taxes and productivity (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007)
- Close to 30% of students who enter HS this year will not graduate in 4 years and ½ of all African American and Latino students will not graduate in 4 years
- HS dropouts have a life expectancy of nearly a decade less than high school graduates (Gibbons, 2006)
- Most future drop outs can be predicted by 6th grade by studying academic and engagement issues from elementary and middle school.

To identify who is most likely to drop out, schools need to identify students who:

- Receive poor grades in core subjects
- Possess low attendance rates
- Fail to be promoted to next grade
- Disengaged in classroom

Focus on 9th Grade:

- Often a critical make it or break it year when students get on or off right track for succeeding in HS
- More students fail 9th grade than any other HS grade
- Disproportionate number of students held back in 9th grade drop out (Herlihy, 2007)

Academic Indicators of HS Dropouts

6 th Grade Predictors*:	8 th Grade Predictors**:	9 th Grade Predictors***:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 80% attendance • Low or failing marks in discipline/behavior • Fail either English or Math • Held back in elementary school • Lack of engagement in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fail English or math • Attendance less than 80% • Reading level at or below 2nd grade • Held back in middle school • Lack of engagement in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance less than 70% • earn fewer than 2 credits • Not promoted to 10th grade on time • More than 1 F (semester) in core academic subjects • 16 yrs old with > 8 credits • Lack of engagement in school

* In middle grades, students generally show either poor academic performance OR lack of engagement, but not both at the same time. Key is to focus in on middle school students who may NOT be failing but are behavioral challenges, disengaged and attendance concerns!**

**The greatest predictors in 8th grade are attendance and failing math and/or English. (Gender, race, age, test scores do not have strong predictive power in this age range.)

*** 9th graders with no previous risk factors who had very poor attendance (less than 70%) in 9th grade, earned fewer than 2 credits during 9th grade or were not promoted to 10th grade had ¼ chance of earning diploma within 8 years. Important to track course failures at semester – especially in core subject areas- as early warning signs for 9th graders at risk.

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Social Indicators of Risk

- Abused or neglected (substantiated cases during high school, foster care, given birth within 4 yrs of starting HS (70% drop out rate)
- Behavior grades (at middle school level is a much better predictor of who will eventually drop out than suspension rates)
- Mobility (changing schools in grades 8-10 creates more risk than changing in early years)

Early Warning Data Tracking: Need an electronic “early warning system” and plan of action for supporting these students. Data must be collected regularly and available in accessible/usable forms. Staff must be trained to use the data and develop strategies to meet individual needs.

Best Practices in Preventing Youth from Dropping Out of School:

- School Climate: facilitate student engagement by addressing overall school climate
 - o Eases transition into HS
 - o Provides rigorous and relevant curriculum
 - o Ensure K12 alignment with state standards
 - o Prepare students for rigor in a way that doesn't bore them
- Rigor: Ensure that raising high school academic rigor and keeping students in school are not mutually exclusive! Must have a balance between relevance and rigor
 - o Provide supports so students stay on track
 - o Extend learning time
 - o Provide challenging learning opportunities (even in catch up courses so students remain engaged)
 - o Focus both on transition from HS to college and MS into HS
- Highly Effective Teachers:
 - o Teacher expertise is the largest factor explaining the gap between African American and Caucasian student achievement. Low performing students with learning barriers achieve at higher standards if taught by high quality teachers.
- Extended Learning Time:
 - o Extended learning time is beneficial but *interventions must be individualized and intensive*. Sporadic homework help and irregular counseling have virtually no impact on dropout prevention.

Many drop out prevention programs were noted and the re-occurring theme for success focused around youth having consistent access to strong, positive, healthy relationships with adults. This includes tutoring and counseling on a regular basis. This also includes significant connections with parents and families and helping parents learn to participate in their child's education and manage adolescent behavior more effectively.

Wrap-around Services are critical needs for youth with significant risk factors. It is critical for schools and community agencies to link together to bring all available resources to bear to promote student success.