



Dropout versus Graduation Why Youth Drop Out and How to Keep Them in School

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National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities
NDPC-SD

Session Focus



- ★ Who drops out and why
- ★ Why dropout matters
- ★ Dropout risk factors
- ★ Where to start
 - ★ Developing a plan
 - ★ Identifying needs
 - ★ Selecting and implementing interventions

2



Bare Facts

- ★ About **20% of *all* students dropout out of school**, including about 40% of the nation's lowest socio-economic groups and 10% of youth in the highest two SES levels.
- ★ **About 28% of all students with disabilities dropout of school each year** – about 800 students with disabilities 'officially' drop out of school every school day.

3

How Big Is the Problem for Students with Disabilities?

- ★ Last year, 104,101 students with disabilities dropped out of school: enough to fill over 2,600 school buses.



Sources of dropout data: NLTS-2 study and www.ideadata.org 4



Activity: Characteristics of Dropouts

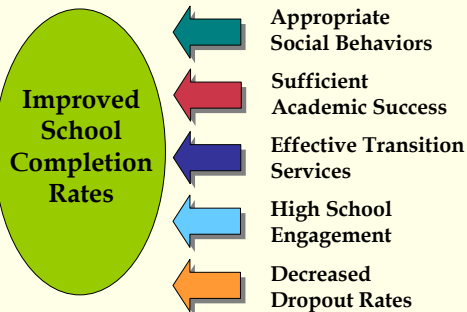
- ★ Absent more than 10 days
- ★ Participated few or no school activities
- ★ Disliked school
- ★ Failed 3-5 classes
- ★ Retained one or more years including 9th Grade
- ★ Received 5-9 discipline referrals
- ★ Were identified in middle school for lack of academic progress
- ★ Did not return Sophomore year

(Huffman, K.L., WVU Dissertation, 1999)

- ★ *So, what are your dropouts like?*

5

What Factors Lead to Better School Completion Rates?



6

Why Students Drop Out

- ★ Push effects – situations or experiences within the school environment that aggravate feelings of alienation, failure and dropout (e.g., raising standards without providing supports, suspension, negative school climate)

- ★ Pull effects – factors external to the school environment that weaken or distract from the importance of school completion (e.g., pregnancy, need to support family or care for a family member)

7

Student Engagement in School and Learning

★ Engagement is a multi-dimensional construct involving associated indicators and facilitators (Christenson, 2002)

- ★ *Academic* (homework completion, on-task)
- ★ *Behavioral* (attendance, participation)
- ★ *Cognitive* (relevance of education to future)
- ★ *Psychological* (sense of belonging)

8

Dropouts Often Experience Negative Outcomes

- Unemployment and underemployment
- Criminal involvement
- Less access to higher education and vocational preparation
- Low self esteem
- Generational effects

9

Dropouts Experience Negative Outcomes - Earnings

- ★ The 'employed' dropout earns \$19,000 per year
- ★ Over 40 years of employment this is about \$376,000 less than peers with a high school diploma and \$1.3 million less than 4-year degree holders
- ★ It takes about 3 years for a dropout to find initial "employment" and about 11 years to find stable employment

10

Bottom Line

- ★ *Some factors cannot be easily altered—others CAN, however*
- ★ Factors can be categorized into two major types:
 - ★ *Status*
 - ★ *Alterable*

11

For Students with Disabilities

- ★ Alterable variables associated with dropout
 - ★ Negative attitudes toward school
 - ★ Bad behavior
 - ★ High rates of absenteeism
 - ★ Poor academic performance
 - ★ Low participation in extracurricular activities

12

Address Alterable Variables

School level alterable variables associated with school completion for students with disabilities

(Wagner, Blackorby & Hebel, 1993)

Providing direct, individualized tutoring and support to complete homework assignments

- ★ Support to attend class, and stay focused on school
- ★ Participation in vocational education classes
- ★ Participation in community-based work experience programs and training for competitive employment

13



Identifying the Problem

14

Steps Districts and Schools Can Take

- ◆ Monitor risk factors
 - ◆ Academics
 - ◆ Attendance
 - ◆ Disciplinary infractions

These are good indicators of risk for present and future dropout problems

15

***Steps Districts and Schools
Can Take***

- ◆ Look at the trends from year to year
- ◆ See what patterns the data show in the schools within your district or school
- ◆ Use any trends or patterns you see to focus TA efforts
- ◆ Don't ignore the "good" schools – leverage their success in schools that need help

16

***Steps Districts and Schools
Can Take***

- ◆ Focus on engagement in school
- ◆ Intervene early – don't wait for trouble
- ◆ Address *both* protective *and* risk factors
 - ◆ Completing homework, attending and participating, coming to class prepared, expecting to graduate, having good self concept
 - ◆ Poor attendance, academic problems, behavior problems, failing a grade, working to support the family

17



Reviewing School-Level Data

18

Digging into the OSEP Indicators and 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

19

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?
- ★ 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”?

20

Graduation Gap

All student rate – Special Ed rate = ?

- ★ Do the math for your school...

A positive gap value means that special-ed students have a lower graduation rate than all students

21

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 that specifically addresses SWD?
- ★ Did the school meet its targeted dropout rate?

22

Dropout Gap

Special ed rate – All student rate = ?

- ★ A positive gap value means that special-ed students have a higher dropout rate than all students

23

Activity

Break into small groups

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

24

Guiding Questions: Discipline

- ★ What percentage of students received in-school suspensions?
- ★ What percentage of students received out-of-school suspensions?
- ★ What percentage of students were expelled?
- ★ How many office referrals were there?
- ★ Are the data consistent between all students and students with disabilities?

25

Guiding Questions: Behavior Supports

- ★ Does the district or 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?

26

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)
- ★ Has the rate changed over time?
- ★ Does your district or school have an attendance policy?
- ★ Does your district or school have targets for attendance rates?
- ★ Does your district or school have a program to boost attendance?

27

Activity

Break into small groups

- ★ Read the prompts for discipline, behavior and attendance. Discuss how your district or school performed.

28

**Guiding Questions:
Policies and Procedures**

- ★ What priority does dropout receive in your district or school?
- ★ Are there written policies or procedures that deal with dropout prevention?
- ★ Is there a dropout-prevention program?
 - ★ Does it include students with disabilities?
- ★ Are particular students or groups at risk because of any policies or procedures?

29

Activity for Here &/or At Home

- ◆ List a few policies or procedures in your district or 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?

30

Steps Districts and Schools Can Take

- ◆ Review and, as needed, revise dropout-related policies and procedures. Eliminate those “killer” policies!
 - ◆ Attendance
 - ◆ Discipline: suspension/expulsion/office referrals
 - ◆ Definition of a dropout and graduate
 - ◆ Diploma options
 - ◆ Exit codes (E.g., moved, not known...)
 - ◆ Maintaining/transferring student records

31



Developing an Action Plan

32

Action Plan

★ The action plan will initially assist and guide personnel with identifying tasks, delegating responsibilities, identifying resources, developing a timeline, identifying indicators, and beginning the process of selecting suitable interventions.



Putting It Together

- ◆ Identify a core team of people from your district or 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.
- ◆ As a team, review and expand your answers the probes and work on those we didn't do today.
- ◆ Work together and identify areas of need as well as areas of strength.

34

Putting It Together

- ★ Are there related areas in which your district or school didn't make the targets or criteria?
 - ★ E.g., did the school miss its discipline and attendance goals?
 - ★ E.g., did the school miss its targets for AYP, have low pass rates on EOC tests, and have generally low scores on diagnostic math tests?

35

Putting It Together

- ◆ Continue this data-driven process with your team and identify problem areas in your district/school
- ◆ Use the worksheets in your materials to begin developing a plan that addresses your school's needs

36

Putting It Together

- ★ Once you've identified 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.

37

Action Plan

- ★ Begin with tasks that will allow your team to effectively identify and examine:
 - ★ Risk factors and alterable variables that increase SWD risks for dropping out (-)
 - ★ Current policies or procedures (push effects) that may impede school completion for SWD (-)
 - ★ Interventions, strategies, or programs in place to support SWD at risk for dropping out of school (+)
 - ★ Current strategies or practices implemented to promote parent engagement (+)
- ★ An example plan is provided in your materials.



Guiding Questions

- ★ What do we know that is evidence based?
- ★ What programs have greatest impact?
- ★ What data sets should we review?
- ★ What policies tend to push kids out of school?
- ★ What populations should we focus on first?
- ★ What critical checkpoints should be the highest priority?
- ★ What intervention frameworks will focus our work?

39

Homework

- ★ When you return to your district/school
 - ★ Develop answers to each of the data probes
 - ★ Evaluate your district/school's policies and procedures with respect to dropout
 - ★ Identify problem areas in your district/school and hypothesize the causes
 - ★ Use the worksheets to begin developing a plan to address your school's needs

40

Additional Resources

- ★ www.ndpc-sd.org
- ★ www.dropoutprevention.org
- ★ www.nsttac.org/
- ★ <http://www.psocenter.org/>
- ★ www.pbis.org
- ★ <http://www.abt.sliidea.org/>
- ★ <http://www.sri.com/policy/cehs/dispolicy/nlts.html>
- ★ www.ideadata.org

41

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