

What Every Administrator Should Know about School Dropout Prevention

MLSBD Administrator Conference

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Data Trends

- **There are current forces that are impacting dropout rates in the US:**
 - (1) Required attendance to age 18,
 - (2) High school exit exams, and
 - (3) Legislation.
Currently, fifteen states require that students attend high school until the age of 18 with other states considering such a proposal (Zinth, 2006).

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Early Indicators

- **Research has consistently shown that problems identified during preschool persist unless early intervention is provided**
 - E.g., disruptive/off-task behaviors, difficulty working with peers, and so on
(Campbell & Ewing, 1990; Dishion, French, & Patterson, 1995; Moffitt et al., 1996; Fox, Jack, & Broyles, 2005).
- **Therefore...**
 - an integrated, comprehensive approach to dropout should include children and youth as early as possible through graduation.

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Graduation

- **National graduation rates are far below trajectories specified by law**
- **Graduation rates range from 57.4% in Nevada to 87.6% in Nebraska for 2003-2004**
- **Rates have increased steadily over the past 4 years**
 - 71.7% in 2000-2001 to 75% in 2003-2004
(Seastrom, Hoffman, Chapman & Stillwell, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

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Graduation

- **34% of students graduated in 2002 with the skills and qualifications needed to attend college**
Greene & Winters, 2005
- **80% of incarcerated youth were reported to have dropped out of high school**
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995

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Students with EBD

- **Graduation rates for all youth are approximately 70% as compared to less than half of students with disabilities graduating from high school; even more dismal is the rate of graduation for students with emotional disturbance below 30%.**

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Regular Diploma

- **Less than half (47.6%) of students with disabilities 14 and older exited school with a regular diploma in 2000-2001**
USDE, 2005
- **Dropouts are more likely to have health problems, engage in criminal activities, and become dependent on welfare and other government-related programs**
Rumberger 1987

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NCLB and IDEA2004

- **The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires states to report the graduation rate for all students in the Annual Yearly Progress Report (AYP).**
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 requires states to report on indicators of the health of special education within each state as part of a six year plan: the State Performance Plan.**

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NLTS2

- **Recent findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (NLTS2; Wagner, 2005) point to dismal post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities who dropped out of high school as compared to youth with disabilities who completed high school**

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Graduation & Dropout Rates by Disability- USDE, 2005

Disability Category	% Graduated	% Dropped Out
Learning Disability	53.6	38.7
Speech and Language	52.3	39.7
Mental Retardation	35.0	34.3
Emotional Disturbance	28.9	65.1
Visual Impairments	65.9	21.1

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Three-Tiered Model of Supports

- **A model that provides a framework for thinking about the provision of supports includes prevention and intervention at the universal, secondary and tertiary levels**
Sprague & Walker, 2000

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Universal Level of Intervention

- **Primary prevention approach**
 - interventions that are considered universal
 - the intervention/prevention approach for all students regardless of the presence of risk factors.
 - cost per student lower than for interventions at the secondary or tertiary levels

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Universal Level of Intervention

- **Specific examples:**
 - Student advisory programs that monitor academic and social development of middle or high school students
 - Deliberate outreach efforts to involve students in extracurricular activities
 - School to work programs that foster success in school through linkages to employers and educational opportunities
 - Systematic school wide positive discipline and behavioral support programs

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Universal Level of Intervention

- Initiatives that work to build welcoming school environments, favorable school climate and caring relationships
- Deliberate efforts to build collaboration and expand communication between the school, family, and community
- Organizing large schools into smaller learning communities to decrease alienation and build a sense of belonging

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Secondary Level of *Prevention*

- Interventions that are *selected* –
 - To address the needs of students who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out of school.
 - Process of disengaging from school may have begun as evidenced by low or failing grades, poor attendance, or suspensions.
- Examples at the secondary level of prevention include:
 - Approaches that are designed to decrease the frequency or intensity of problems that contribute to the likelihood of dropping out.
 - Approaches may be implemented with small groups and include skill building focused on conflict resolution, peer tutoring, or social skills.

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Check & Connect: A Model for Engaging Students in School and Learning

- **Designed to:**
 - Support students
 - Promote engagement
 - Promote connectedness
 - Approach is strength based
 - Utilizes the strategies of relationship building, problem solving, and persistence

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Check and Connect

- **Consists of three main components:**
 - (1) a mentor who works with students and families for a minimum of two years,
 - (2) regularly checking on the school adjustment, behavior, and educational progress of the student, and
 - (3) intervening in a timely manner to re-establish and maintain the student's connection to school and learning, and to enhance the student's social and academic competencies.

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Tertiary/Intensive Level of *Prevention*

- **Incorporates interventions that are considered indicated or targeted**
 - Designed to address the needs of a small percentage of students who are at high risk and are showing clear signs of leaving school early.
 - Students may be at risk as evidenced by the presence of multiple risk factors.
 - Indicated interventions include approaches designed to remediate established problems.

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Tertiary/Intensive Level of *Prevention*

- These interventions are typically highly individualized and are usually more costly per student as compared to universal or selected interventions.
- Approaches may include:
 - wrap-around services,
 - individual functional behavior analysis,
 - individualized behavior management plans, or
 - intensive mentoring programs

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National Models of Prevention

- Iowa Approach to Supports
- Minnesota Initiative
- APEX

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Iowa's Positive Behavioral Supports Model

- Spans preschool through high school in order to provide supports to children and youth as early as possible and throughout the educational experience.

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Minnesota Dropout Prevention Initiative

- Specifically targets those groups of students at greater risk of dropping out through:
 - targeted assistance at the middle school,
 - the development of specific assessment tools to enhance effective programming, and
 - statewide coordination of efforts (including technical assistance) across agencies

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New Hampshire's Achievement for Dropout Prevention Excellence Project

- Is an effective statewide model to reduce high school dropout rates and suspension and expulsion rates.
- By combining Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports and Rehabilitation for Empowerment, Natural Supports, Education and Work, New Hampshire has successfully implemented technical assistance across the state.

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National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities

- NDPC-SD supports states through the following activities:
 - (a) identifying evidence-based dropout prevention interventions, programs, and practices;
 - (b) producing evidence-based knowledge useful to school professionals;
 - (c) providing targeted technical assistance to states in a variety of formats;
 - (d) disseminating dropout prevention information through multiple methods; and
 - (e) preparing youth with disabilities for further education, employment, and independent living

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Fifteen Strategies to Address Dropout

- **National Dropout Prevention Center**
<http://www.dropoutprevention.org/>
- **Strategies selected from a list of 15 dropout prevention strategies compiled by the National Dropout Prevention Center**
Smink, & Reimer, 2005
- **Emphasis placed on collaboration between parents, youth, schools and community and programming to community, school, and student needs.**

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Fifteen Drop-Out Prevention Strategies

Systemic Renewal

- A continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners.

School-Community Collaboration

- When all groups in a community provide collective support to the school, a strong infrastructure sustains a caring supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve.

Safe Learning Environments

- A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. A safe learning environment provides daily experiences, at all grade levels, that enhance positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills in all students.

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Fifteen Drop-Out Prevention Strategies

Family Engagement

- Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school.

Early Childhood Education

- Birth-to-five interventions demonstrate that providing a child additional enrichment can enhance brain development. The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately drop out is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of their school experience through the primary grades.

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Fifteen Drop-Out Prevention Strategies

Early Literacy Development

- Early interventions to help low-achieving students improve their reading and writing skills establish the necessary foundation for effective learning in all other subjects.

Mentoring/Tutoring

- Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring, also a one-to-one activity, focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.

Service-Learning

- Service-learning connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. This teaching/learning method promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels.

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Fifteen Drop-Out Prevention Strategies

Alternative Schooling

- Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts a variety of options that can lead to graduation, with programs paying special attention to the student's individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.

After-School Opportunities

- Many schools provide after-school and summer enhancement programs that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of areas. Such experiences are especially important for students at risk of school failure because these programs fill the afternoon "gap time" with constructive and engaging activities.

Professional Development

- Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and have an avenue by which they can continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.

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Fifteen Drop-Out Prevention Strategies

Active Learning

- Active learning embraces teaching and learning strategies that engage and involve students in the learning process. Students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners when educators show them that there are different ways to learn.

Educational Technology

- Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction to engage students in authentic learning, addressing multiple intelligences, and adapting to students' learning styles.

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Fifteen Drop-Out Prevention Strategies

Individualized Instruction

- Each student has unique interests and past learning experiences. An individualized instructional program for each student allows for flexibility in teaching methods and motivational strategies to consider these individual differences.

Career and Technology Education (CTE)

- A quality CTE program and a related guidance program are essential for all students. School-to-work programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to measure up to the larger demands of today's workplace.

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Major Causes

- Problem behaviors coupled with academic difficulties or prior academic failures are key risk factors that are predictive of school dropout
Dunn, Chambers, & Rabren, 2004
- The repeated use of exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspension, has been identified as one of the major factors contributing to dropout.
- Exclusion from class due to disciplinary action also leads to lost instructional time and increased academic difficulties
Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004; McAndrews, 2001; Skiba, 2000

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Other Risk Factors

- According to NLTS2 data, academic progress and school completion are not equally distributed across disability, income, or ethnicity.
- Almost half of youth with emotional disturbances drop out.
- Youth with disabilities from low-income households continue to experience high dropout rates, and Hispanic youth have experienced the smallest improvement in school completion over time.
- High absenteeism and grade retention are serious risk factors for dropping out that can be monitored by schools.
- Feelings of isolation and alienation often lead to social and psychological disengagement that result in school dropout

Kortering & Braziel, 1999

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Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine (2005)

- Dropouts have fewer options for postsecondary education than do students who remain in school. Additionally, only a few dropouts complete a GED within two years of leaving high school.
- Dropouts are more likely to be unemployed or employed in low-skilled, lower-paying positions. While initial earnings may be comparable between dropouts and graduates, dropouts tend to work more jobs and earn less per hour than graduates. Dropouts also experience a "ceiling effect" in earning power much sooner than graduates.

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Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine (2005)

- Dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to need the support of living with parents in early adulthood, experience health problems, engage in criminal activities, and become dependent on welfare and other government programs.
- Dropouts are more likely to commit crimes as compared to students who complete school. Three to five years after dropping out, the cumulative arrest rate for youth with SED is 73%.

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Suggestions for Success

- Establish a leadership team to actively coordinate implementation of dropout prevention efforts.
 - These efforts include adequate funding, technical assistance and training, broad based support, on-going evaluation, and planned sustainability of efforts.
 - Members of this team should include individuals whose roles, responsibilities, and activities are associated with the development of programs and practices to:
 - improve academics and attendance,
 - prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior,
 - foster family engagement, and
 - manage and evaluate resources related to school improvement.

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Suggestions for Success

- **Establish systems for routine monitoring of risk indicators associated with dropout.**
 - graduation rates,
 - dropout rates,
 - attendance rates,
 - office referrals for disciplinary actions,
 - academic performance, and
 - successful progression from grade to grade.

Suggestions for Success

- **Create a local action team to analyze data and address dropout prevention at the local level.**
 - In addition to school personnel, this team should include parents and members from the community.
- **Intervene early, often as early as preschool.**
 - High school is too late to begin dropout prevention, especially for youth in urban schools.
 - Invest in improvements in early childhood education (emphasize reading, math, and prosocial behavior).

Suggestions for Success

- **Increase family engagement and school involvement.**
 - Involve parents consistently and persistently.
 - The most accurate predictor of a student's school achievement is the extent to which his/her family encourages learning. Parents exert a powerful influence over whether their adolescent children with disabilities complete high school.
 - Higher rates of school completion are associated with parents' expectations that children will go on to postsecondary school and greater family involvement at school.

Suggestions for Success

- **Create school environments that are inviting, safe, and supportive.**
 - Safe and inviting environments facilitate learning and increase school attendance.
 - Provide enhancements that increase school-wide social competence and positive behavioral supports.
- **Help students to address problems that interfere with learning.**
 - Provide or assist students in obtaining social, health, and other personal resources they will need to overcome obstacles to their learning and meet their emergent basic needs.

Suggestions for Success

- **Use proven practices.**
 - There are evidence-based practices that can be used to address dropout and the factors associated with dropping out.
 - Implement strategies that promote academic success, promote prosocial behavior, and increase student engagement.
 - Personalize programs as needed to address individual student needs and improve post-school outcomes.

Suggestions for Success

- **Implement strategies that promote academic success, promote prosocial behavior, and increase student engagement.**
 - Personalize programs as needed to address individual student needs and improve post-school outcomes.
- **Listen to students.**
 - Students want teachers who care about them and their future.
 - Students want you to hear what they have to say.
 - Students can tell you a lot about strategies and practices that will make school more relevant to them and decrease their desire to exit early.

Suggestions for Success

- **Provide relevance and rigor.**
 - Provide opportunities for students to apply their learning in relevant, real world situations and help them see the connections to their own futures as productive and successful citizens within the community.

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Suggestions for Success for Students with Disabilities

- **Assistance is often needed, especially for students with EBD.**
 - Teachers who maintain a comfortable and welcoming classroom environment can often foster opportunities for positive interactions.
 - Teachers may also enhance personal relationships [with caring adults] through organizational structures that provide time and formal opportunities.
 - Relationships and connections enhance students' connection with school and facilitate successful school performance.

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Suggestions for Success

- **Focus on effective instruction.**
 - Student performance is enhanced when teachers use instructional time efficiently, while providing multiple means of engagement.
 - Create and implement systemic improvement activities that focus efforts on changing teaching and learning practices.
 - Promote academic engagement that leads to academic success and the acquisition of useful employment skills.

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Suggestions for Success

- **Administrators are key and their support is essential. Administrators should be viewed as:**
 - strong and effective leaders who believe in all students
 - lead the charge for the adoption and implementation of data-based decision making and evidence-based strategies.
 - encourage faculty and staff and support their efforts.
 - Parental support and community involvement and collaboration should be encouraged and reinforced. build trust by listening to and communicating with students, staff, parents, and community leaders.
 - set the charge, lead the way, provide support, stay the course, evaluate outcomes, and make modifications as needed.

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Resources

- **Websites**
 - www.pbis.org
 - www.ndpc-sd.org
 - www.rc4alliance.org

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