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PROJECT 10 TOPICAL BRIEFS are published on a bi-monthly basis. Each issue focuses on a specific topic or theme, highlighting current and upcoming information and events related to secondary transition. This month the Topical Brief is focused on **Using Data to Decrease Dropout Rates for Students with Disabilities**.

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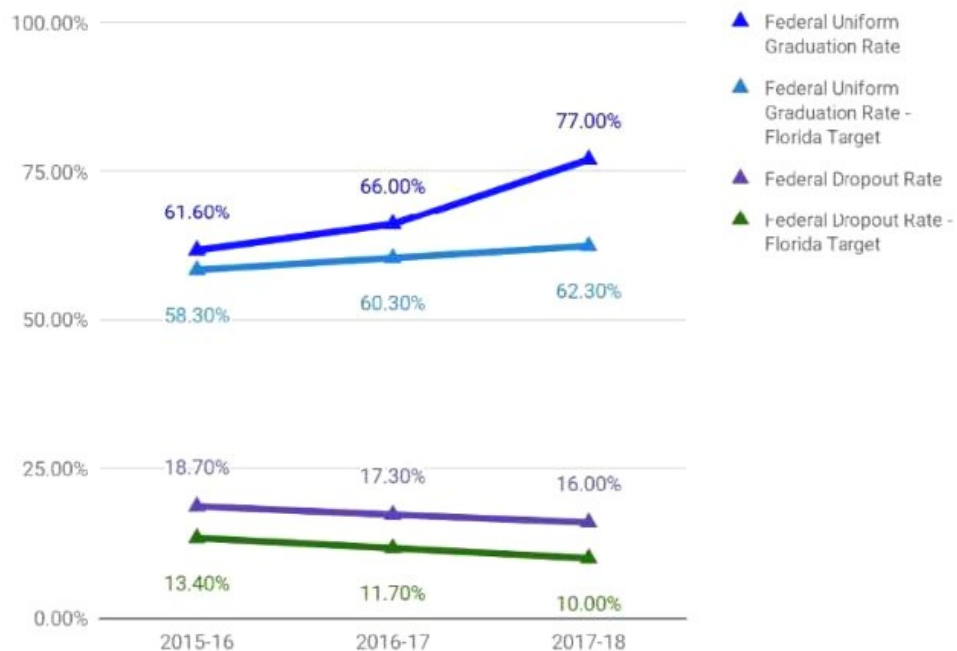
Using Data to Determine Dropout and Graduation Trends: Where Are We and Where Do We Go from Here?

What does the graduation data for your district look like? The majority of districts showed increases in their 2017-18 graduation data. As the chart below demonstrates, the federal uniform graduation rate for students with disabilities increased by 11 percentage points and exceeded the graduation target by 14.7%. While changes in legislation and school policy regarding diploma type may have contributed to part of this increase, much of the increase is a credit to the collective efforts of all who support students with disabilities on their journey to high school graduation and beyond.

The dropout data also showed an improvement in 2017-18, decreasing by 1.3%. As the chart below shows, the decreases in dropout out are not keeping up with dropout rate targets. Decreasing dropout rates of students with disabilities is a crucial factor in the process of graduating students who are prepared to move into the future college, career and community ready.

What are the next steps needed to decrease dropout rates and continue to increase graduation rates? After celebrating successes and affirming school personnel, school partners and students for their hard work, conduct a thorough examination of district graduation and dropout data. Diagnose the problem areas and develop a plan to address the barriers of dropout prevention. The next few segments of the Topical Brief will provide suggestions and resources for your work.

Florida's Federal Uniform Graduation and Federal Dropout Trends for Students with Disabilities



Verifying the Data: A Pre-Strategy

In the business world, 'pre-strategy' is described as work that sets the stage or supplies the context for the primary strategy and it is a fitting description for this dropout prevention suggestion (McDonald, 2017). Before you start to identify strategies to implement, be certain that you have a complete understanding of your district's dropout challenges. An important part of the examination of dropout data is ensuring the accuracy of the data.

Pre-Strategy: Run a withdrawal/dropout report regularly, at least once per quarter, to verify dropout code accuracy at the student level. Assessing the accuracy of dropout codes allows schools and school districts to do the following:

- Make corrections to inaccurate codes. Refer to the table below for coding errors commonly seen across Florida districts as a resource to help you find undetected coding errors.
- Identify students and try to locate and contact them. Attempt to locate the missing student through phone calls to family members or emergency contacts.
- Investigate whether a record request was made by another school. If so, change the dropout code to a school transfer code (W01-W04, W24).

After completing these action steps, you can rely on your data to help you determine the types of student engagement and dropout prevention strategies that are appropriate for the issues your district is facing. Although verifying codes has been referred to as a pre-strategy, it is not a one-time action. Verifying data and correcting recordkeeping codes is also an ongoing process that precedes strategy implementation.

The table below highlights a few areas where common coding errors have been observed. Review the short list and check to see if any of these errors are occurring in your school. Additionally, a supplemental tool is included at the end of the Topical Brief that provides a wider array of withdrawal and dropout coding hints taken from the Project 10 "Using School-Level Data to Increase Graduation Success of Students with Disabilities: An Early Warning System (EWS) Toolkit".

Common Coding Errors		
Withdrawal and Dropout Codes	Coding Error	Coding Error Solution
Multiple Entry or Re-Entry Codes	Lack of timely entry/re-entry code	Ensure that an entry or re-entry code is entered in a timely manner to indicate that the student will be continuing. If this code is not entered, it could revert to a dropout code.
Multiple Dropout Codes	Coding students who defer with a dropout code if they stop attending their 18-22 program	In order for a student to defer they must meet graduation requirements; therefore, they cannot be given a dropout code. If a student stops attending his/her 18-22 program, the IEP team should reconvene (the student may also accept his/her standard diploma at any time).
W26 - Any student who withdraws from school to enter the adult education program prior to completion of graduation requirements.	For DJJ students: Incorrect use of W26 after the GED® has been taken.	<p>Prior to testing for the high school equivalency examination, a withdrawal code of W26 must be entered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the student does not pass, he/she should be re-enrolled in Florida Public Schools.• If the student has passed all subject-area tests of the GED® examination, two records should be submitted in the <i>Student End of Year Status</i> format for Survey 5. These records are W26 and grade level 30 or 31 (one record) and a W45, which indicates the student was awarded the GED® as an adult student. <p>* The last code for a DJJ student who took the GED® should never be W26. A W45 does not mean the DJJ student must be enrolled in adult education prior to reporting a W45.</p>

Using the Data to Develop Preventive Strategies

Use your data analysis to identify the strategies that are needed in your district to keep students engaged in the classroom and committed to graduating from high school. Highlights of dropout prevention strategies found in research are displayed in the graphic below.



Dropout Prevention Research: Effective Strategies

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Strategic Data Use | 6. Early Warning Systems |
| 2. Restructure School Programs, Policies and Procedures | 7. Eased Transition from Middle School to High School |
| 3. Academic Interventions | 8. Family Engagement |
| 4. Student Engagement | 9. Mentoring |
| 5. School Climate Initiatives | 10. Career and Vocational Preparation |

Sources: Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Fox, J. H., 2013; Dary, T., Pickeral, T., Shumer, R., & Williams, A., 2016; and Wilkins J. & Bost, L. W., 2016

Project 10's training, "It's T.I.M.E. for Dynamic Dropout Prevention: Scaling Up Student Engagement and School Climate for Student Success" focuses on data analysis, data verification, student engagement strategies and dropout prevention strategies. This training includes dozens of strategies that fall into one of four classifications. These four classifications of strategies are as follows:

1. Transform School Systems
2. Inspire High Expectations for Schools, Teachers and Students
3. Maximize Meaningful Learning
4. Establish Positive School

Climate

The strategies are conveniently provided in the handout, "Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement Takes T.I.M.E."

Two new tools have been developed that complement Project 10's dropout prevention and student engagement training. The "Student Engagement Best Practice Checklist" is a tool

Student Engagement Best Practice Checklist	
<p>Instructions: Use the following checklist and action plan as a tool to assess how well your school or district implements best practices for improving graduation rates and decreasing dropout rates. These questions incorporate the recommendations from America's Promise Alliance as well as research-based best practices from the Project 10 "It's T.I.M.E. for Dynamic Dropout Prevention: Scaling Up Student Engagement and School Climate for Student Success." The checklist can be used by a group and participants should represent a diverse group of perspectives. The team should review each question and place a "✓" in the column indicating that the practice is being implemented. Next, review the unmarked items and prioritize those the team feels can make the greatest impact. Finally, create an action plan for the selected priorities. Space is provided for three action steps, but feel free to add additional steps if the team desires. Access discretionary project staff for support you may need with your action items.</p>	
Transform School Systems	✓
1. Are you using the Six Key Practices in "Moving Your Numbers" including the Six Key Practices Moving Your Numbers Assessment Instrument? http://www.movingyournumbers.org/images/resources/81157-self-assessment.pdf	
2. Have you walked through your schools lately and analyzed all aspects of the school environment to ensure students and families feel safe, engaged, welcomed and valued as a part of the school community?	
3. Have you reviewed the dropout and graduation rates for all the high schools within your district to prioritize the schools that need immediate support with student engagement?	
4. Have you reviewed and ensured that there is complete alignment with your School District Mission, Vision, Student Progression Plan and Student Handbook?	
5. Is there anything in the above that may have unintended consequences that could result in students dropping out ("push out" factors)? (For example: Attendance Policies; Zero Tolerance Policies vs. Restorative Practices; Grade Floor Policies)	
6. Have you examined the districts in your size-alike category to see which have the lowest dropout rate/highest graduation rate so that you can reach out to them for strategies they are using (MIS/IT systems, interventions, best practices, policies, procedures, personnel structure, etc.)?	
Inspire High Expectations for Schools, Teachers and Students	✓
1. Does everyone in your district, in every school, at every level, know the district graduation rate, dropout rate, individual school rates and goals for each?	
2. Have you implemented an early warning system (EWS) using student performance data (attendance, discipline, GPA, test scores, earned course credits)?	

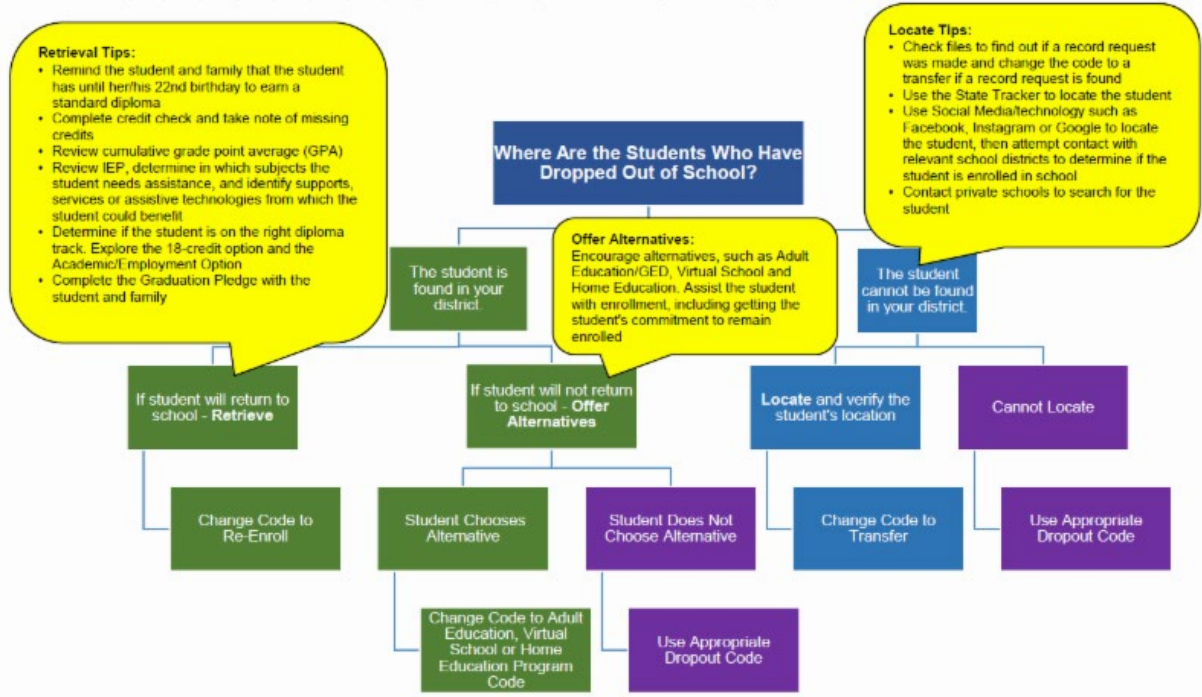
This chart plots pathways that will assist schools to find a student who has dropped out of school, re-enroll the student, offer alternatives and use the appropriate codes to reflect the student's choices. The chart also includes tips that can assist school personnel throughout the process.

Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement Takes T.I.M.E.			
Transform School Systems	Inspire High Expectations for Schools, Teachers and Students	Maximize Meaningful Learning	Establish Positive School Climate
School Policies, Procedures and Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a comparative analysis of school policies, procedures and practices to create one seamless, efficient system that maximizes access and highest student achievement Strengthen transition procedures from middle school to high school Implement Restorative Practices: Revisit school policies and procedures in regard to zero tolerance policies and consequences for disciplinary infractions; consider peer mediation and peer court Implement flexible scheduling and flexible school day Establish a grade floor and/or grade forgiveness policy Schedule smaller classes Adopt policies that promote inclusion 	Strategic Data Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement an early warning system (EWS) Use student performance data (attendance, discipline, GPA, test scores, earned course credits) and the steps needed to graduate when developing the master schedule and involve all departments in the process Review student performance data (attendance, discipline, GPA, test scores, earned course credits) and the steps needed to graduate in every IEP meeting Use teacher performance data to facilitate a cooperative learning community that empowers all teachers to maximize student achievement Evaluate student IEPs to ensure the elements to support student success are present, including accommodations, modifications and assistive technologies Create career academies in which students are given choices such as Law Enforcement Academy, Medical Academy, etc. 	Academic Interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use universal design for learning (UDL): Make lessons relevant, inclusive and interesting Use instructional techniques that emphasize the relevance of classroom learning Use the flipped classroom pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed Use technology meaningfully Use differentiated instruction (DI) Teach learning strategies – test taking skills, study skills, time management and organization skills Incorporate team teaching; co-teaching; support facilitation Integrate self-determination and self-advocacy training for students Use End-of-Course Boot Camps to prepare students for success Use Strategic Instruction Model (SIM helps students to problem-solve and helps students learn how to learn) 	School Climate Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embark on school-wide effort for personnel to demonstrate care and build trust with students; relationship building Encourage teacher, family and student participation and involvement at school activities Use school attendance shout outs, such as "The Class of 2018 had zero absences this week!" Incorporate a graduation pledge (including Cap and Gown Project): Identify students at-risk for every cohort (graduating class) for the next four years Plan graduation pep rallies

developed by the State Secondary Transition Interagency Committee's Student Success Subcommittee. This tool assists schools or entire districts to assess the research-based practices that are currently being implemented. The checklist also provides space for users of the tool to design a brief action plan that includes identifying strategies to adopt and outlining the steps needed to incorporate those strategies.

The second of the new tools is the Dropout Prevention Flowchart.

Dropout Prevention Flowchart: This flowchart may assist school personnel to locate students who have dropped out of school and restore them to a graduation pathway. Calculate the total number of students in a district, age 14-21, which includes middle school students and 12-Plus Students (5th, 6th, 7th year Seniors), that drop out (DNE, W05, W13, W15, W18, W21, W22, W23) within the school year August through July. Divide the total by the number of ESE Exiters for the same year. An Exiter is defined as a student who does the following: graduates (4-year, 5-year, 6-year and 7-year seniors that graduate); earns a Certificate of Completion; earns a General Education Diploma (GED); or drops out of school (DNE, W05, W13, W15, W18, W21, W22, W23). Contact your Regional Transition Representative (RTR) for technical assistance.



Using the Data to Support Students at Risk of Dropping Out: Create a CRAM Week!

While you are working to transform school policies that support student engagement; inspire all education stakeholders to give their very best; maximize meaningful classroom learning; and establish a comfortable school environment where students feel secure, you have students who are at risk of dropping out right now. They need immediate help. A CRAM Week might be one way of addressing that issue. You may be wondering, "What is a CRAM Week?" As an educator, you might guess that it is an acronym and you are 100% correct! CRAM stands for Credit Recovery and Assignment Make-Up (CRAM). CRAM Week is an entire week of intensive support that involves administrators, graduation coaches, school counselors and teachers who volunteer to operate the CRAM Center and assist students to complete missed assignments and recover credits needed to graduate. Use your early warning system to identify students who need assistance and also encourage teachers to refer students who need to make up exams, tests, quizzes, homework assignments, research assignments or other projects. Additional suggestions for facilitating your school's CRAM Week are as follows:

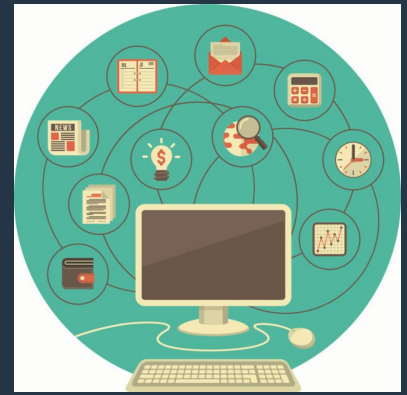


- Open the center before school, during lunch and after school.
- Equip the center with computers, printers, school supplies and art supplies.
- Ensure the center has plenty of personnel on hand to assist students.
- For making up assignments, help students to identify the assignments they need to finish and provide encouragement and assistance as needed.
- For credit recovery, seat the students by subject area and provide allowable support. Remember, students experienced challenges with completing the task the first time, so providing support and guidance is key.

Resources

[Check & Connect](#)

Check & Connect is a comprehensive student engagement and dropout prevention intervention that is directed toward students who demonstrate signs of disengagement and appear to be at risk of dropping out of school. Florida's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) provides technical assistance and trainings to school sites implementing Check & Connect.



[Check & Connect Resources for Coordinators](#)

Assorted Check & Connect resources for school district programs coordinators are available on this webpage.

[Florida Department of Education, Office of Dropout Prevention](#)

The Office of Dropout Prevention provides technical assistance, strategies and resources to schools, parents and community organizations to ensure students have access to innovative programs which enhance students' opportunities for access, advancement and achievement.

[It's T.I.M.E. for Dynamic Dropout Prevention: Scaling Up Student Engagement and School Climate for Student Success \(Project 10 Training\)](#)

Reviews federal uniform graduation and dropout rate calculations, explain strategies to increase student engagement that result in decreased dropout rates (e.g., early warning systems [EWS]) and describe dropout withdrawal codes including helpful hints on locating and re-engaging students who have dropped out.

[National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities](#)

Provides information, guidance, and resources for State and Local Education Agencies, parents, and students in order to improve student outcomes by collaborating, developing knowledge, disseminating information and providing technical assistance.

[Using School-level Data to Increase Graduation Success of Students with Disabilities: An Early Warning System \(EWS\) and EWS Toolkit \(Project 10 Training\)](#)

This training explains how schools and districts can use early warning system (EWS) data to promote timely graduation and post-school success. This training will include information on how to access and utilize data to impact graduation rates at the school level and interventions to help students graduate. In addition, effective practices implemented in other districts across the state will be shared.

Upcoming Events

Working With the Experts: D/HH - Mental Health Issues for Students who are D/HH

Date: April 6, 2019

Location: Tallahassee, Florida

Description: The Resource Materials and Technology Center for the D/HH is pleased to welcome Lisa Curzio-Blake, M.A., and Terri Pendleton, licensed mental health counselor, as they present Mental Health Issues for Students who are D/HH. This one-day training will discuss mental health issues that children who are D/HH commonly face and learn how to recognize them, including working with students with limited language skills.

Click [here](#) to register.



For additional questions, contact Carmelina Hollingsworth at c.hollingsworth@rmtcdhh.org or by phone at 800-356-6731.

VISIONS XXVI, A Transition Planning Institute and Conference: Charting the Course

Date: April 10-12, 2019

Location: World Golf Village Renaissance Resort in St. Augustine, FL

Description: This conference features compelling keynote speakers, informative breakout sessions and updates from the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services. This conference will enable exceptional student education (ESE) personnel to learn about the newest developments in transition, connect with other ESE personnel across the state and leave with valuable resources that can support their mission to improve transition outcomes for students with disabilities in their districts. Click [here](#) to download the registration form. (The Early Bird registration ends after 3/19/19.)

For additional information, please visit <http://floridadcdt.org/visions-annual-conference.html>.

2nd Annual Making Wellness a Priority: Healthy Minds and Healthy Futures Conference

Date: May 1-3, 2019

Location: Omni Resort at Championsgate, FL

Description: This exciting statewide conference is sponsored by SEDNET (the Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities) and Florida APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First).

Click [here](#) to register.

The 21st Annual Family Café

Date: June 7-9, 2019

Location: Orlando Florida

Description: The Annual Family Café brings together thousands of individuals with disabilities and their family members for three days of information, training and networking each June. The event features a wide range of individual breakout sessions; an Exhibit Hall with vendors and agencies; and other special events. There is no registration fee for individuals with disabilities and their family members.

Click [here](#) to register.

Save the Date: Florida Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) 2019 Summer Institute

Date: June 10-12, 2019

Location: Bonita Springs

Description: More information will be forthcoming. To make your hotel reservations at a discounted rate, click [here](#) or call the hotel at 877-803-7534.

Save the Date for the Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education (FCIHE) Hartwick Symposium Series 2019: Secondary Symposium

Date: June 11, 2019

Location: Orlando, Florida

Description: This one-day symposium is designed for secondary teachers, therapists, guidance counselors, transition specialists and administrators who work with students with intellectual disability.

Click [here](#) for more information.

The 2019 Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)

Date: July 17-21, 2019

Location: Tallahassee, Florida

Description: The 2019 Florida YLF is a four-day leadership event that empowers Florida high school students with disabilities ages 16-19 by introducing them to various transition resources and preparing them to enter the workforce or attend college or technical school after graduation.

Click [here](#) to download the application (Applications after March 1, 2019, may be considered on a space available basis.)

For additional questions, contact Ray Ford at ray@floridacils.org or by phone at 850-575-6004.

Upcoming Webinars

National Technical and Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) Tool Release Alert: Transition Gradebook is Released

Date: March 14, 2019

Time: 3:00 pm

Description: In this webinar, the Transition Gradebook, will be introduced. The Transition Gradebook is a school-level tool for recording individual students' transition-related activities, including the required pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS), and various risk and protective factors associated with dropout, graduation and positive post-school outcomes.

Click [here](#) to register.



Making the Transition Beyond High School: Technology to Support Success for College and Career (PACER Center)

Date: March 21, 2019

Time: 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Description: This workshop will feature assistive technology to support youth with disabilities at college and in their career. Demonstrations will include tools and apps for executive function, computer access, reading, writing, and note-taking. This workshop will be delivered in a face-to-face setting. Live streaming is available and can be requested during registration.

Click [here](#) to register.

Lay a Foundation: Engage Families to Address Chronic Absence in the Early Years.

Date: March 21, 2019

Time: 11:00 am - 12:30 pm PST / 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm EST

Description: This webinar focus on students' very first years in school in this first in a four-part Attendance Awareness Webinar series hosted by United Way. Research shows that good attendance matters from the very beginning of a child's formal education. Learn how our featured speakers partner with families to nurture positive transitions from preschool to elementary school, build awareness of the connection between attendance and school success experiences, and address attendance barriers.

Click [here](#) to register.

Webinar Series (NTACT)

Date: April 11, 2019

Time: 3:00 pm

Description: Session 1 of 3 - Assessment is the ongoing collaborative process of collecting information about a student's interests, preferences and needs as they relate to the current and future demands of working, education, living, personal and social environments. In this webinar, the definitions and requirements related to assessment as authorized by IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA will be examined and effective strategies to operationalize a coordinated assessment process will be discussed. Click [here](#) to register.

References

Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Fox, J. H. (2013). *Building a grad nation: Progress and challenge in ending the high school dropout epidemic - 2013 annual update*. Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises, the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, America's Promise Alliance, and the Alliance for Excellent Education. Retrieved from <https://www.americaspromise.org/sites/default/files/d8/BuildingAGradNation2013Full.pdf>

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Project 10 Supplemental Resource

The "Using School-Level Data to Increase Graduation Success of Students with Disabilities: An Early Warning System (EWS) Toolkit" contains the following tool that provides helpful information regarding the use of withdrawal and dropout codes. In addition to the "Common Coding Errors" that were mentioned in the segment, Verifying the Data: A Pre-Strategy, the codes that are marked here in red indicate areas where errors are commonly observed.

Withdrawal/Dropout Codes Defined and Helpful Hint Procedures for Student Retrieval		
Code	Definition	Helpful Hints
DNE	Any K–12 student who was expected to attend school but did not enter as expected for unknown reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that complete contact information is available for the student, including emergency contact information.• At the end of the third week of the new school year, attempt to locate the student/family. In some instances this may require multiple phone calls to various numbers or family members and possibly a home visit.• Investigate whether a record request was made by another school. If so, change to the school transfer code (W01-W04, W24).
W13	Any K–12 student withdrawn from school due to court action. (This code does not apply to DJJ placement.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This code is specific to students who have withdrawn due to court action, but are not in a Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facility. If the student has entered a DJJ facility, he or she will be receiving educational services and should be coded as a transfer (W01-W04, W24).• If the student is in a local county jail, offer educational services and recode (use district school code for providing education to inmates in jail) accordingly.• If the student has been sentenced to an adult facility, determine if the student is enrolled in an adult education program. If so, verify and re-code as a W26.
W15	Any K–12 student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attempt to locate the student/family.

	who is withdrawn from school due to non-attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you locate the student at another school, change the code to transfer (W01-W04, W24). • If you locate the student and find he/she has enrolled in an adult education program, recode as a W26. • If the student was working toward a special diploma (this only applies to students who entered 9th grade prior to 2014-15 school year) or is employed and has sufficient credits, offer Diploma Option 2. If the student agrees, enroll the student and change the code accordingly. If not, encourage the student to return to school by offering various supports. Another option, if the student has a significant cognitive disability, is to consider switching the student to the 24 credit standard diploma option available only to students with significant cognitive disabilities, who take access courses and the alternate assessment. • If the student was working toward a standard diploma, determine if the student has enrolled elsewhere, has enrolled in an adult education program, or is employed. If he or she is working toward a standard diploma, is employed and has sufficient credits, then encourage the student to pursue the 24 credit standard diploma option with academic and employment requirements available only to students with disabilities, the 24 credit standard diploma option or the 18 credit option available to all students.
W18	Any K–12 student who withdraws from school due to medical reasons and is unable to receive educational services, such as hospital/homebound services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer Hospital/Homebound services. • If the family and student accept Hospital Homebound Services, update the code.
W22	Any K–12 student whose whereabouts are unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely should a student be given this code unless they have actually disappeared. • Attempt to locate the student. • Determine if the student has enrolled elsewhere, has enrolled in an adult education program, or is employed. If the student was working toward a special diploma (this only applies to students who entered 9th grade prior to 2014-15 school year) or is employed and has sufficient credits, offer Diploma Option 2. If the student agrees, enroll the student and change the code accordingly. If not, encourage the student to return to school by offering various supports. Another option, if the student has a significant cognitive disability, is to consider switching the student to the 24 credit standard diploma option available only to students with significant cognitive disabilities, who take access courses and the alternate assessment. • If the student was working toward a standard diploma, determine if the student has enrolled elsewhere, has enrolled in an adult education program, or is employed. If he or she is working toward a standard diploma, is employed and has sufficient credits, then encourage the student to pursue the 24 credit standard diploma option with academic and employment requirements available only to students with disabilities, the 24 credit standard diploma option or the 18 credit option available to all students.



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Project 10: Transition Education Network

Assists Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and post-school outcomes.

Project 10: Transition Education Network
University of South Florida St. Petersburg
Questions or comments?
Email us at project10@stpete.usf.edu.
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