

Student Engagement Best Practice Checklist

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.

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)?	
a. Is there a process in place before a dropout code is entered into the system? Are students required to meet with a school counselor or an administrator first?	
b. Have appropriate school personnel been trained on withdrawal codes and <i>Student Exit Survey</i> data?	
c. Is there a mechanism in place to track students in residential programs (DJJ, Psychiatric, etc) who will be transitioning back into your district?	
3. When developing the master schedule, do you involve all departments in the process; keeping in mind how all students learn and utilizing your best teachers to work with struggling students?	
4. Are you using teacher performance data to facilitate a cooperative learning community that empowers all teachers to maximize student achievement?	
5. Have you created career academies in which students are given choices such as Law Enforcement Academy, Medical Academy, etc.?	
a. Have you created ninth grade academies?	
6. Do you offer mentoring programs such as Check & Connect, Peer mentoring, or have you created your own mentoring program?	
7. Do you offer tutoring programs through parent volunteers, National Honor Society, peer tutoring, etc.?	
Maximize Meaningful Learning	√
1. Is the use of instructional techniques that emphasize the relevance of classroom learning taking place school-wide in every classroom? (For example, Strategic Instruction Model (SIM), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), Flipped Classroom)	
2. Are teachers using technology in a meaningful way?	

a. Are there policies in place that prohibit students from bringing their own technology in the classroom?	
b. Are classroom websites such as Edmodo and Class Dojo utilized?	
3. Do you have a full continuum of services (co-teaching, support facilitation, consultation, learning strategies, resource, self-contained)?	
a. How is the continuum of services designed – is the IEP Case Manager also the students’ learning strategies teacher and/or support facilitator (one person providing consistent instruction, contact and interventions)?	
4. Does your school offer/teach learning strategies (test taking skills, study skills, time management and organization skills)?	
a. Is it offered to all students or only students receiving special education services?	
5. Have you integrated self-determination, self-advocacy, interpersonal skills, relationship building training/instruction for students?	
a. Is it for all students or only for students with disabilities?	
b. Do you intentionally provide opportunities for peer friendships or peer mentoring?	
6. Have you utilized the use of End-of-Course (EOC) Boot Camps to prepare students for success on EOC exams?	
7. Do your teachers use Dream Boards? (Bulletin board with students’ career dreams that can be used to relate lessons to selected professions.)	
8. Do you promote student participation and leadership in IEP meetings?	
a. Do students have input about who is invited to their meetings?	
b. Are students encouraged to exercise self-determination and self-advocacy skills through IEP participation and student-led IEPs?	
c. Is there a self-monitoring tool in place for the students to track their GPA and credits?	
9. Does your school take students on tours of technical colleges, state colleges and universities?	
a. Do you sponsor career fairs and incorporate other related career exploration activities in the classroom?	
Establish Positive School Climate	√
1. Is there a school-wide effort for personnel to demonstrate care, build trust and establish meaningful relationships with students?	
a. Do students have a voice in decision-making, designing and implementing solutions, and best practices to improve the school environment?	
2. Do you encourage teacher, family and student participation and involvement at school activities?	
3. Do you incorporate school attendance shout outs, such as “The Class of 2019 had zero absences this week!”?	
4. Have you incorporated a graduation pledge, such as the Cap and Gown Project, which identifies students at-risk in every cohort (graduating class) for the next four years?	
5. Do you plan graduation pep rallies?	
6. Have you integrated dropout prevention initiatives using Interagency Councils (IACs) to form a shared vision with all stakeholders?	
a. Have you used your IACs to expand school and student support through a wide range of school partners?	
7. Do you have business partners that provide incentives in terms of dropout prevention and graduation success?	
Action Plan Steps	
As a result of using this checklist, we decided to change, implement, or create a process.	Who, What, Where, When and Why
(For example – Implement an Early Warning System to assist in tracking students at risk for not graduating with their cohort and/or at risk for potentially dropping out of school.)	Who: Invite Project 10 Regional Transition Representative to train MIS/IT, District Personnel, School Administrators, School Counselors, ESE Personnel, Teachers and Data Entry/Registrars What: Project 10 Early Warning System and Sustainability including Best Practice Steps When/Where: Scheduled for Mid-August at District Office Why: To increase graduation and decrease dropout rate
1.	
2.	
3.	