

project10

transition
education
network

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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 **student engagement and dropout prevention**.

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Student Engagement: Simply Accomplished or Particularly Difficult?

Student Engagement: What Is It?

Student engagement is both a simple and complex concept. On one hand, student engagement is such a simple concept that it almost seems silly to bring it up. We may think, "Of course students need to be engaged for school success; engagement is foundational for success in any sphere of life". Let's take a look at the definition of engagement. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary explains that engagement, in this context, is "emotional involvement or commitment" (2017). Aha! This is where the particularly difficult part enters the story. Evoking emotional involvement and commitment is no easy task. Emotional involvement and commitment cannot be forced but can be inspired. Students need positive relationships with teachers, administration, school staff and peers. Meaningful, relational connections in the learning environment are the substance of student engagement.



Going a step further, defining student engagement can also be a tricky proposition. The literature abounds with many rich descriptions of student engagement, but a single, widely-accepted definition has not emerged. A working definition of student engagement could be as follows:

Persistence in learning and growth fueled by interest, curiosity and a sense of belonging.

Students may be intrinsically engaged in learning regardless of the learning environment; however, most often student engagement occurs within a supportive, encouraging and engaging environment where meaningful relationships are formed. Cultivating an environment that promotes student engagement can be a challenging task because it requires a concerted agreement and cooperation from all corners of the campus.

Student Engagement: Why Is It Important?

We learn from the literature that students who are engaged in the school community are more likely to persist in their educational experience and graduate from high school. Students who drop out of high school are known to experience a higher incidence of unemployment and lower annual earnings. Writing for the Center for Labor Market Statistics, Sum and McLaughlin (2009) stated:

Slightly less than 46 percent of the nation's young high school dropouts were employed on average during 2008. This implies an average joblessness rate during 2008 of 54% for the nation for young high school dropouts. Their employment rate was 22 percentage points below that of high school graduates, 33 percentage points below that of young adults who had completed 1-3 years of post-secondary schooling and 41

school through graduation, the dropout statistics have declined to 17% in the past three years. The data is moving in the right direction and continued progress is desired. As we consider how to nurture student engagement, we can identify effective approaches and strategies that can be replicated in districts and schools.

Although we talk about the issue of student engagement in state-wide, district-wide and school-wide contexts, forming relationships, the heart of student engagement, happens in the context of person-to-person.

Organizations of all kinds are constantly growing and changing, even the actions of one person can make a positive difference. Just like the ripple effect, one person can impact an entire system. Watch the [YouTube video](#) below about the expectations students have for their schools (3 minutes). Identify a way that you, as an individual, can help keep students engaged in school.



[10 Student Expectations for Schools](#) (video)

It's Time for Intentional School Engagement Practices

Project 10 has been developing a training on student engagement and dropout prevention that will soon be available. The training, *It's T.I.M.E. for Dynamic Dropout Prevention: Scaling up Student Engagement and School Climate for Student Success*, emphasizes the essential first step in improving student engagement and preventing dropout - observation. Carefully paying attention to and defining the issues that contribute to the dropout in your district are essential. While there are common causes for student disengagement and dropout, regions and schools may face particular

challenges related to their area's demographics. Consult the following list to form a clear picture of student engagement in your school or district:

- Attendance
- School policies and practices
- Discipline issues
- School early warning system (EWS)
- Teaching strategies
- Family involvement
- Student achievement
- School climate
- Family needs
- Withdrawal code clues
- Exit Interview
- Student Surveys

Doll, Eslami and Walters (2013) explained that dropout reasons fall into the categories of "push", "pull" and "fall" and are defined as follows:

- Push-Out: Students are forced out of school because of problems with attendance, school discipline or academic problems.
- Pull-Out: Students are drawn away from school to go to work or assist with other family needs.
- Fall-Out: Students fail to engage in school because they don't like the school experience or because of apathy.



When you accurately identify the causes of student disengagement, you are able to form remedies to address those causes. The training is rich with techniques needed to fully analyze your school environment and strategies for implementation that can increase student engagement, and unite your entire school community around student success.

Contact your Regional Transition Representative (RTR) to schedule the new Project 10 training in early 2018. It will be a constructive and encouraging way to begin the new year.

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Region 5 - South Florida - Lisa Friedman-Chavez | lfchavez@mail.usf.edu

Resources

[Beach Center on Disability](#)

Located at the University of Kansas, the Beach Center's goal is to improve the quality of life for families and individuals affected by disability through research, teaching, technical assistance, service and a resource library.

[Center for Parent Information and Resources](#)

This website is the central "Hub" of information and products created for the network of Parent Centers serving families of children with disabilities.



[Check & Connect](#)

Check & Connect promotes student engagement with school, reduces dropouts and increases school completion. It originated from a partnership of researchers, practitioners, parents and students led by the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. Florida has implemented this model in multiple districts.

[Dropout Prevention Programs and Strategies](#)

Mentoring programs from the Florida Department of Education, are highlighted as follows:

- [Best Buddies Florida Program](#)
- [Big Brothers Big Sisters Program](#)
- [Black Male College Explorers](#)
- [Boys and Girls Club Mentoring Services](#)
- [Communities In Schools of Florida](#)
- [Learning for Life Program](#)
- [Take Stock in Children](#)
- [Florida State Alliance of YMCAs](#)

[Early Warning System \(EWS\) Tool](#)

Using readily available student data, this Microsoft Excel-based program identifies early warning signs of students who may be at risk of dropping out of high school. In addition to the tool, implementation and technical manuals as well as other resources are provided.

[Effective Practices and Predictors Matrix](#)

The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) has developed a matrix of effective practices and predictors of student success. Many of these identified practices have lesson plan starters.

[Exploring New Territories: Technology Resources for Struggling Students and Students with Disabilities - 2010 Version](#) (pdf)

Students disengage when they can't access instructional materials and activities. This online publication from FDLRS contains information and resources for Universal Design for Learning; North Star Guide to Technology Planning; appropriate and accessible instructional materials; resources for reading, math, science, and other classes including e-learning; computer access; assistive technology; standardized testing accommodations; and BEES technology services. Technology solutions for "continuity of learning" challenges due to pandemics and natural disasters are also addressed.

[Institute of Education Sciences \(IES\) Practice Guide: Dropout Prevention](#)

This guide is designed with educators, administrators, and policymakers in mind as it provides recommendations that focus on reducing high school dropout rates. Strategies presented include identifying and advocating for at-risk students, implementing programs to improve behavior and social skills and keeping students engaged in the school environment.

[A Literature Map of Dropout Prevention Interventions for Students with Disabilities](#) (pdf)

This research synthesis, announced by the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, represents the most up-to-date review of dropout interventions for students with disabilities. The most commonly implemented interventions included multiple components involving mentoring, family outreach, academic support, attendance monitoring, additional support services, and students' participation in school-related activities. Several studies also targeted student's specific disability-related needs, such as self-determination skills, social skills, and vocational skills (Dynarski, et al., 2008).

[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.

[National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, Mentoring/Tutoring](#)

This website features an overview of mentoring, including a rationale for and the impact of mentoring. This page also features key elements of successful mentoring programs and a link to related resources.

[PACER Center, Dropout Prevention Project](#)

PACER Center collaborates with state and national agencies and organizations to address dropout prevention for students with disabilities, with a focus on encouraging effective parent involvement with their transition-aged youth.

[Preventing Drop-Out Through Increasing Family Involvement: The Importance of Systematic and Focused Effort](#) (pdf)

This article is from the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD), Big IDEAs Dropout Prevention Newsletter, November 2009. The article references various research studies, suggestions for improving family involvement, and resources.

[Secondary Transition Roadmap for Families](#) (pdf)

This Project 10 resource will assist families to become familiar with graduation and post-school options available to students with disabilities. This twelve-page booklet, Secondary Transition Roadmap for Families, shares easy-to-follow directions that guide families and students toward transition destinations- to graduation and beyond.

[Student Engagement](#) (ppt)

Student Engagement is a PowerPoint presentation created by Amy Reschly, PhD, and James Appleton, PhD, and provides information on theories, strategies, models, studies, data reports and the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI).



Upcoming Events

2017 Educational Strategies and Student Engagement Institute Destination Graduation: Together Ensuring Every Student Succeeds

December 6-8, 2017
Rosen Plaza Hotel
Orlando, FL

Click [here](#) to register.

Statewide Conference for District Coordinators for Intellectual Disabilities (InD)

December 6-8, 2017
Sheraton Tampa East
Tampa, FL

The ACCESS project announces a statewide conference for district coordinators for InD.

Click [here](#) to register.

Project 10 Regional Winter Institutes 2018

Region 5 - South Florida | Monday, February 12, 2018
Region 4 - West Central Florida | Tuesday, February 13, 2018
Region 3 - East Central Florida | Wednesday, February 14, 2018
Region 2 - Northeast Florida | Thursday, February 15, 2018
Region 1 - Northwest Florida | Friday, February 16, 2018

Join us for the 2018 Regional Winter Institutes. Hear the latest transition updates and reports on transition progress and activities since last year.

Registration and additional information coming soon!



Upcoming Webinars

District Best Practices in Inclusive Education (BPIE) Overview and Updates Webinar

November 29, 2017
3:00 PM ET

December 1, 2017
9:30 AM ET

The Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) Administration Project will offer a district BPIE overview and updates webinar on. The content is the same for both sessions; choose the date and time that works best for you.

Click [here](#) to join the webinar.

Presuming and Constructing Competence for Students with Autism and Other Disabilities: Why it may be the most important thing you do as a practitioner

November 30, 2017
3:30 - 4:30 PM ET

New research with students with significant disabilities challenges practitioners to presume the cognitive and communicative competence of each and every learner. This webinar with Dr. Joanne Cafiero will provide the philosophical and historical context for presuming and constructing competence.

Click [here](#) to register.

#includemeincollege: How One Girl's Dream of College Changed Others' Ways of Thinking

Tuesday, December 12, 2017
4:00 - 5:00 PM ET

Join blogger, advocate and self-designated supermom, Jennifer Farmer, as she tells the story of how her daughter Chloe decided she wanted to go college and all the things that happened to help Chloe achieve that goal. Jennifer will share tips and strategies to communicate effectively with high school staff, set measurable goals for your student or child and how to start the college search itself.

Click [here](#) to register.

WINTAC to Host Webinar Focusing on Career Pathways in the Job Center

December 12, 2017
9:00 - 10:30 AM ET

The Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) will present a webinar on career pathways. This webinar will discuss career pathways as a structure for facilitating collaborative labor exchange and building connections with business sector boards. It will also examine partner roles and tools and supports for effective engagement of people with disabilities.

Click [here](#) to register.

Put Yourself on the (Campus) Map: Marketing Your Program On Campus

Thursday, January 18, 2018
3:00 - 4:00 PM ET

Amy Dwyre D'Agati will share why your on-campus program needs to be marketed. Just like you go out to businesses to sell yourself and your talented students, you need to market yourself to campus entities. Learn ways to do this so you can open up a variety of opportunities for your students, including academic experiences, on-campus internships, special projects, job shadowing experiences, campus activities and more.

Click [here](#) to register.

Additional Announcements

[BroadFutures Video Addresses Unconscious Bias Toward People with Disabilities](#)
(video)

This project of the Youth Transitions Collaborative at the Health Services for Children (HSC) Foundation's National Youth Transition Center has released a new video entitled Unconscious Biases: Shattering Assumptions. This [animated narrative](#) describes personal and societal biases that shape how the workplace and various communities view disability.

Emerging Implications of Section 511 and Pre-Employment Transition Services of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (archived Webinar)

This [webinar](#) explores implications of Section 511 and Pre-ETS explored the impact of ongoing policy implementation on youth with significant disabilities and families.

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Story 1

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Story 3

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Email us at project10@stpete.usf.edu.

For back issues of Project 10 Topical Briefs, visit our Topical Briefs page on the [Project 10](#) website.

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?

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