This Month's Issue

E-News is published on a monthly basis during the school year. Each issue focuses on a specific topic or theme. This month's theme is **DROPOUT PREVENTION**.

Dropout Risk Factors: Do You Know What They Are?

According to a major report from the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) and Communities In Schools, Inc. (2007), risk factors for school dropout can be categorized across four domains: individual, family, school, and community. Researchers studied risk factors in three of these domains (individual, family, and school) and found several factors in the individual domain and family domain that were statistically significant as delineated below.

Individual Domain

1. Individual background characteristics (status)
   - Has a learning disability or emotional disturbance
2. *Early Adult Responsibilities (alterable)*
   - High number of work hours and parenthood
3. *Social Attitudes, Values, and Behaviors (alterable)*
   - High-risk peer group, high-risk social behavior, highly socially active out of school, school performance, low achievement, and retention/over-age for grade
4. *School Engagement (alterable)*
   - Poor attendance, low educational expectations, lack of effort, low commitment to school, and no extracurricular participation
5. *School Behavior (alterable)*
   - Misbehavior and early aggression

> *If a significant risk factor is **alterable**, then **change is possible !***

Family Domain

1. Family background characteristics (status)
   - Low socioeconomic status, high family mobility, low education level of parents, large number of siblings, not living with natural parents, and family disruption
2. *Family engagement/ commitment to education (alterable)*
   - Low educational expectations, sibling has dropped out of school, low contact with school, and lack of conversation about school

These dropout risk factors can be further categorized as alterable or inalterable/status. This distinction is important, because some status factors may be difficult or impossible for school-based programs to change. The good news is that the majority – *72 percent* – of the significant risk factors identified in the study are alterable. When applying evidence-based interventions and prevention programs, change is possible!

To learn more about evidence-based interventions, see the full report and resources listed in this newsletter.

Reference

Hammond, C., Linton, D., Smink, J., & Drew, S. (2007). Dropout risk factors and exemplary programs. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Preventions Center, Communities in Schools, Inc. Retrieved from http://www.dropoutprevention.org/major-research-reports/dropout-risk-factors-exemplary-programs-technical-report

Chronic Absenteeism

Did you know…

- Chronic absence is a critical early warning sign that students and schools are headed off track.
- Students have to be present and engaged in order to learn. Thousands of students are academically at risk because of extended absences.
- One in ten kindergarten and 1st grade students misses a month of school with excused and unexcused absences.
- By middle and high school, the rates of chronic absence are far higher.
- Chronic absences can leave children unable to read well beyond the end of 3rd grade.
- Chronic absences can set a pattern of poor attendance and academic failure for older students, fueling the dropout rate. (Attendance Works, n.d.).

According to Bruner, Discher, and Chang (2011), chronic absenteeism is typically defined as "…missing 10 percent or more of school days for any reason" (p. 1). Their research revealed that, because of the way attendance is tracked – average daily attendance (ADA) – many schools may not detect high levels of chronic absence.

While most schools in the study with 97 percent ADA rarely had problems, schools with an ADA ranging between 93 and 97 percent needed to analyze their data, and most schools with an ADA below 93 percent had high concentrations of chronic absenteeism.

Bruner and colleagues suggested that the reason chronic absence is overlooked is probably because most schools assume that a 95 percent attendance rate automatically equates with good attendance. Here's an example:

> Even in a school of 200 students with 95 percent average daily attendance, 30 percent (or 60) of the students could be missing nearly a month of school (i.e., chronically absent) over the course of the school year (p. 3).

So, what can schools and districts do? Bruner and colleagues recommended beginning at the elementary school level. Schools may need to collect more and better data to answer these questions:

- How many students are chronically absent?
- Which students are chronically absent?
- Why are students absent?
- Is tardiness a problem?

District-level actions may begin with identification of schools with less than 95 percent ADA and collecting data around the questions posed above. To be successful, efforts to address chronic absences should involve collaboration between schools, families, and communities. There are many resources available at the Attendance Works Organization website (http://www.attendanceworks.org). For more information, see the Dropout Prevention Resources on the next page.

References

Attendance Works. (n.d.). *Why it matters*. San Francisco, CA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.attendanceworks.org/

Bruner, C., Discher, A., & Chang, H. (2011, November). *Chronic elementary absenteeism: A problem hidden in plain sight.* San Francisco, CA: Attendance Works and the Child & Family Policy Center. Retrieved from http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/ChronicAbsence.pdf

Accurate Dropout Coding Aids Dropout Prevention

- Jack was coded as W22 "Whereabouts Unknown," but he was enrolled in a school district one county over. Therefore he should not have been counted as a dropout.
- Mavis was coded as W18 "Withdrawn due to Medical Reasons." Mavis returned to school three weeks later after her psychiatric hospitalization, but no one went back and fixed the code in the computer system.

Accurate Dropout Coding—continued

- Renee dropped out of school just three credits short of receiving her standard diploma because she had to go to work to support her family after her father was laid off from his job. The school district coded Renee as W15 "Withdrawn due to Non-Attendance" instead of intervening to help her graduate.
- Ricky was coded as W13 "Withdrawn due to Court Action" after he was arrested for stealing a pack of cigarettes. It was not his first offense, so he was sentenced to a DJJ facility where he is receiving education services. The district should have verified his placement and then changed the code.
- Toni was coded as W05 "True Dropout" which generated an exit interview allowing the district to learn the reasons why Toni chose to dropout.

Accurate graduation and withdrawal coding is vital for school grades and overall student success. It is critical that codes are entered correctly in order to ensure graduation and the tracking of dropout trends in order to put the necessary interventions for improvement in place. Coding accuracy is supported by vigorous prevention, intervention, and recovery efforts. Districts that perform these well have better Indicator 1 (Graduation) and Indicator 2 (Dropout Rate) outcomes.

A school district's dropout rate is one of the most important indicators of school success. Accurate graduation and withdrawal coding is needed to ensure accurate historical and baseline data for evaluating the effectiveness of supplemental academic instruction and for constructing solid dropout prevention programs. Aggressive follow-up for students who have been assigned dropout withdrawal codes provides more accurate information and can effectively improve school and district dropout and graduation rates. Contact your Project 10 Regional Transition Representative to learn how to review data reports and for some helpful hints on using Withdrawal Codes for student follow-up.

Dropout Prevention Resources

Are you subscribed to these free resources?

1. National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC)
Homepage, http://nsttac.org/
Weekly Update; send email to Secondary Transition TA Center at nsttacmail@uncc.edu, with "Subscribe to NSTTAC Weekly Update" in Subject line; be sure to provide your email address.

2. National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N)
Homepage, http://www.dropoutprevention.org/
Dropout Prevention E-Newsletter, http://www.dropoutprevention.org/e-newsletters; to sign up, click on the link and enter your email address.
Radio Webcasts, http://www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast; archives available.

3. National Dropout Prevention Center – Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD)
Homepage, http://www.ndpc-sd.org/
Big IDEAs E-Newsletter, http://www.ndpc-sd.org/contact/bigIdeasSubscribe.php; to subscribe, click on the link and enter your email address.
Teleseminars & Web Events, http://www.ndpc-sd.org/dissemination/teleseminars.php ; archives available.

4. National High School Center or "Better High Schools"
Homepage, http://www.betterhighschools.org/default.asp
E-News for Better High Schools, http://www.betterhighschools.org/join.aspx; to join, click on the links and complete the registration form.
Webinars, http://www.betterhighschools.org/webinar/default.aspx; archives available.

5. Attendance Works: Advancing Student Success by Reducing Chronic Absence
Newsletters, http://www.attendanceworks.org/news-story-archive/newsletter-archive/join-our-email-list/; to join, click on the link and complete the registration form.
Tools and Technical Assistance, http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/

Other News and Events

Project 10 Regional Institutes
Meet with your colleagues for a day of updates, information, and networking related to secondary transition. There is no cost, but reservations are required. Lunch is on your own. Dates and locations for the remaining Institutes are:

   Northwest Region 1: February 15, 2013, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, FDLRS/PAEC, Chipley, FL. Contact Lori Garcia at lorigarcia@mail.usf.edu

   West Central Region 4: February 19, 2013, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, John R. Trinkle Center, Hillsborough Community College, Plant City, FL. Contact Federico Valadez at fvaladez@mail.usf.edu

   South Region 5: February 20, 2013, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm, Sawgrass Technology Park, Sunrise, FL. Contact Lisa Friedman-Chavez at lfchavez@mail.usf.edu

25th Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM, "Investing for a Lifetime: Education is Economic Development "
http://www.dropoutprevention.org/conferences/25th-annual-at-risk-youth-national-forum
Myrtle Beach, SC, February 17 - 20, 2013

World Arts Film Festival Call for Submissions
The World Arts Film Festival (WAFF) is seeking submissions from first-time and established filmmakers for a wide range of short film screenings, panels, workshops, and exhibits at its inaugural festival, April 11-13, 2013, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Jacksonville. Founded by the non-profit World Arts Education as part of its global educational outreach, the festival will bring diverse groups of filmmakers of all ages and backgrounds, including those with special needs, to meet their audiences and mentor each other in this new venue. The submission deadline is February 28, 2013. For more information on WAFF and the festival submissions process, go to http://www.worldartseducation.org/.

Sixth Annual UJA-Federation Hilibrand Autism Symposium
Wednesday, March 20, 2013, 8:30 am to 4:00 pm
UM-NSU CARD will host a live webcast of Pathways to Independence: Education, Employment, and Social Engagement for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders at the University of Miami Alumni Center. Pre-registration is required. For more information contact Deborah Chin at dchin@psy.miami.edu or 954-262-8555.

2013 Best Practices Forum on Dropout Prevention
http://www.cvent.com/events/2013-best-practices-forum-on-dropout-prevention-registration/event-summary-bf27397e76b540d1906e4635afd427a2.aspx
Kansas City, MO, April 14 - 17, 2013
Ideas, proven programs, and evidence-based research for dropout prevention, family and community engagement, curriculum and instruction, career readiness and technical education, changing school culture, specific populations, school and program safety, and economic development through education

Project 10 Website Updates

The following items were recently added to the Project 10 website at http://www.project10.info:
   A-Z Library
      Money Smart (free financial curriculum from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation)
   Financial Resources > Postsecondary Scholarships
      National Foster Parent Association Youth Scholarship.
   Online Training
      Module 4: Graduation Requirements (for standard diplomas)
   What's New
      Registration links to the Regional Winter Institutes
      New on-line Module on Graduation Requirements
      Exemplary Transition Site Mini-Grant Applications