**National, State, and Local Efforts to
Reengage Out-of-School Youth**

# Literature Scan

**Prepared for Office of Dropout Prevention and Engagement
at the Colorado Department of Education**

### America's Promise Alliance

*Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic*
Alliance for Excellent Education, America's Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises, and Everyone
Graduates Center at John Hopkins University (2014)
http://www.americaspromise.org/building-gradnation-report
http://gradnation.org/resource/building-gradnation-progress-and-challenge-ending-high-school-dropout-epidemic-2014

### American Youth Policy Forum

*Federal, State, and Local Roles Supporting Alternative Education*
Nancy Martin and Betsy Brand (June 2006)
Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy
http://www.ncee.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/GovrolesAltEd.pdf

This paper is one in a series written for the U.S. Department of Labor on the role of alternative education programs in the American education and workforce preparation systems. The first paper, *An Overview of Alternative Education*, reviews the literature on alternative education and offers a typology defining alternative education. The second paper, *Academic Programs in Alternative Education: An Overview*, describes the literature specifically focused on academic programs in alternative education and surveys programs. This third paper examines the ==roles that various levels of government play through legislation, policy, and other initiatives== that support quality alternative education programs to reconnect youth to education and the workplace. It raises issues for policymakers at all levels to consider in facilitating the development of ==expanded alternative education pathways==, which reduce the number of students dropping out of school and provide well-lit reentry points for those who leave school before obtaining a diploma.

*Whatever it Takes: How Twelve Communities are Re-Connecting Out-of-School Youth*
Nancy Martin and Samuel Halperin (2006)
Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum
http://www.aypf.org/resources/whatever-it-takes-2006/

*Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-Of-School Youth* documents what committed educators, policymakers, and community leaders across the country are doing to reconnect out-of-school youth to the social and economic mainstream. It provides background on the serious high school dropout problem and describes in-depth what twelve communities are doing to reconnect dropouts to education and employment training. It also includes descriptions of major ==national program models== serving out-of-school youth.

**Annie E. Casey Foundation**

*Youth and Work: Restoring Teen and Young Adult Connections to Opportunity*.
Annie E. Casey Foundation (December 2012)
http://www.aecf.org/resources/youth-and-work/

Twenty years ago, even as manufacturing jobs moved offshore, young people could still gain a foothold in the workforce through neighborhood stores and restaurants. Over the past decade, youth could find a career track in construction, fueled by the housing boom. In today's economy, the options seem to have disappeared, and America's young people stand last in line for jobs. This KIDS COUNT policy report suggests that business, government, philanthropy and communities must come together to create opportunities and build a stronger workforce for the future. Now is the time to undertake a flexible, focused and nimble approach to strengthen our systems and create new opportunities for disconnected youth.

In this report, you'll learn: (1) The scale of the challenges in connecting young people, ages 16–24, to jobs and opportunity. (2) The current data on out-of-work youth, broken out by a variety of indicators. (3) The steps needed to ensure that young people can launch a career. And (4) the lasting consequences of ignoring the growing number of disconnected youth.

**Boston, Massachusetts**

*Too Big to be Seen: The Invisible Dropout Crisis in Boston and America*
Boston Youth Transitions Task Force (May 2006)
Boston: Boston Private Industry Council
http://www.bostonpic.org/policy/youth-transitions
http://www.bostonpic.org/sites/default/files/resources/too_big_to_be_seen.pdf

This report represents the first year of research and analysis conducted by the Boston Youth Transitions Task Force—a broad cross-section of organizations that includes the Boston Public Schools, community organizations, city departments and state agencies. The Youth Transitions Task Force enlisted Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies to gather and analyze data on struggling students and dropouts, and commissioned parallel qualitative research as well. The ensuing report summarizes the scale and dynamics of the Boston dropout population, and concludes that available alternative education reaches only 15% of dropouts.

Mayor Thomas M. Menino first convened the group in October of 2004 and charged it with lowering the high school dropout rate. The Youth Transitions Funders Group, a coalition of national foundations, provided financial support as part of a national campaign to bring struggling students and dropouts to the center of high school reform. The Task Force has raised the visibility of the dropout crisis by conducting research, making policy recommendations, and piloting innovative changes in practice.

**Education Week**

*Diplomas Count—Second Chances: Turning Dropouts into Graduates*
Education Week and Editorial Projects in Education (June 2013)
www.edweek.org/go/dc13

The 2013 edition of *Diplomas Count—Second Chances: Turning Dropouts into Graduates—*investigates "recovery" interventions that target these out-of-school youths—a group whose prospects for landing a stable job or a postsecondary credential may depend on finishing high school.

**Jobs for the Future**

Back on Track Through College || http://www.jff.org/initiatives/back-track-designs

This model aims to reengage youth and young adults who are off track to graduation, or disconnected from both education and work, and puts them on a path to postsecondary credentials. Jobs for the Future and their partners empower these young adults to find college and career pathways that fit their interests and needs. JFF youth education experts partner with school districts, community colleges, community-based organizations, and national youth-serving networks to develop and expand pathways to high school and postsecondary credentials with value in the labor market.

**Montgomery County, Ohio**

*Out-of-School Youth Annual Report to the Montgomery County Community, 2007–2008*
https://www.sinclair.edu/centers/pub/FFC/FF_Annual_Report_2007-2008.pdf

This report details the background, organization, alternative schools, financial contributions, and evaluation processes during the last years of operation that have enabled this project to move forward. The public/private partnership addressing the needs of these children makes the project special and unique. In addition to the $3.5 million pledged to date in private money, the Federal Government, through the U.S. Departments of Labor and Justice provided $969,000, the State of Ohio TANF $6.4 million, and Montgomery County $3 million. In 2004 the Fast Forward Center received a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant for $1.2 million awarded by the Ohio Department of Education, specifically for the Mound Street Academies. A major development was an award from the State of Ohio for $3 million to support the Out-of-School Youth Initiative in Montgomery County for 2005-2009.

**National Alliance for Public Charter Schools**

*Over-Age, Under-Credited Students and Public Charter Schools: An Exploration of Successes, Strategies, and Opportunities for Expansion*
Kathryn Rock and Bob Rath, Our Piece of the Pie®
Linda Dawson and Ernie Silva, SIATech (2014)
http://www.publiccharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/NAPCS-OPP-OverAge-Report-05.pdf

This brief explores OU students and how they are being served in public charter schools, using profiles of successful schools across the country. While all of these schools use a common combination of strategies, we highlight one strategy in each school for further exploration what seems to be working. The paper also outlines a few additional ideas that can foster the expansion of these types of schools so more struggling students have access to successful models.

**National Dropout Prevention Center/Network**

Model Programs Database || www.dropoutprevention.org

To maintain a list of current model programs for dropout prevention, the National Dropout Prevention Center has created a database of research-based programs and information. Searchable by program strategies and descriptors, this information is available for schools, organizations and other programs to review for opportunities to implement the model program or enhance existing programs. The rating scale for the programs selected for the database is based on the evaluation literature of specific prevention, intervention, and recovery programs.

Model Program Strategies

We have identified 15 effective strategies that have the most positive impact on the dropout rate. These strategies have been implemented successfully at all education levels and environments throughout the nation. Learn More About the 15 Effective Strategies

**National League of Cities' (NLC) Dropout Reengagement Network**

http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families/expanding-youth-opportunities/reengagement

NLC bolsters the growth and development of reengagement centers and reengagement planning efforts in approximately 20 cities across the country through the NLC Dropout Reengagement Network. These centers use a variety of outcome indicators to measure the effectiveness of their programs, including credits earned once a student is reenrolled, the percentage of students still in school or graduated at the end of the school year in which they reenrolled, and graduation or GED completion rates.

*City Officials Discuss Local Structures for Reengaging Disconnected Youth*
Leon T. Andrews Jr. and Andrew O. Moore (2 May 2011)
http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/institute-for-youth-education-and-families/education/dropout-reengagement/city-officials-discuss-local-structures-for-reengaging-disconnected-youth

Cross-system teams from six cities convened in Hartford, Connecticut, to deepen city strategies to reengage disconnected youth, 16-24 year-olds, who are out of school and out of work, including many who are "aging out" of public care systems. NLC's Institute for Youth, Education and Families organized the meeting as part of its Municipal Leadership for Disconnected Youth initiative, which is made possible by the support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Teams from Dubuque, Iowa; Rochester, N.Y.; Tucson, Ariz.; Washington, D.C.; and co-hosts Hartford and Manchester, Conn., participated in the convening, along with representatives from New York City, Philadelphia and Providence, R.I.

*Cities Develop New Strategies for Reengaging Dropouts,*
*Boosting High School Graduation Rates*
Clifford M. Johnson (10 December 2012)
http://www.nlc.org/media-center/news-search/cities-develop-new-strategies-for-reengaging-dropouts-boosting-high-school-graduation-rates

When thinking about the more than one million young people nationwide who drop out of school each year, it is easy to assume that school is the last place they want to be. A growing number of cities are questioning this assumption, however, and increasingly finding that for many recent dropouts it is just plain wrong. City, school and community leaders from 17 cities gathered in Denver last week to share ideas and lessons learned in the development of "reengagement centers," one of the newest and most exciting models for helping dropouts come back to school and thereby boosting high school graduation rates. The peer learning session for NLC's Dropout Reengagement Network was hosted by the NLC Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) in collaboration with the City of Denver and the nonprofit Colorado Youth for a Change, and was made possible through the generous financial support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The inaugural meeting of the network, held late last year in Boston, featured the innovative reengagement centers established through a partnership between the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools and the Boston Private Industry Council.

Reengagement centers share a common goal of bringing recent dropouts back into an appropriate school or alternative education program and helping them complete high school. Some cities have pursued this goal by establishing a central location for the entire community or opening multiple centers in target neighborhoods where young people can get the advice and support they need to reenroll in school. Other cities have opted for "virtual" reengagement centers that forge critical connections and make referrals to schools or alternative programs that can respond to each individual's needs. All of these approaches rely upon direct and extensive outreach efforts to contact recent dropouts, identify the reasons why they have left school, and involve them in creating a plan for resuming their education.

*Municipal Action Guide: Reconnecting Youth through Dropout Reengagement Centers*
National League of Cities (31 July 2014)
http://www.nlc.org/Documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/IYEF/Education/Final_YEF_DropoutReengagementMAG2013.pdf

Research shows that many out-of-school youth want to return to school, but are uncertain how to do so and are fearful they will not succeed once they get there. Helping these young people find alternative pathways to graduation – and productive and promising futures – is a critical challenge facing municipal leaders today. Fortunately, a growing number of cities are leading the way with innovative strategies that provide multiple routes to graduation for all students. These efforts include the establishment of one-stop "reengagement centers" for high school dropouts.

The centers offer a range of services such as individual academic assessments, opportunities to explore different education options and referrals to appropriate schools or other credential programs. Reengagement centers can either operate in a central physical location or through roving staff or other "virtual" connections. Regardless of the specific approach, the goal of reengagement centers and programs is the same: to provide caring, well-trained staff that helps young people develop personalized plans to earn a high school diploma or GED.

An expanding national network of local reengagement centers provides numerous examples and ideas for city leaders considering how best to add reengagement to the local youth-serving infrastructure, and give young high school dropouts a chance to graduate and become productive members of their communities. As with so many areas of education, city leaders are often uniquely well positioned to raise the prominence of dropout reengagement as an issue, set public goals, and convene and sustain effective partnerships. This guide presents nationwide models and strategies that city leaders may pursue to help dropouts finish high school and move along a path to postsecondary education and good jobs.

## New York City

*Multiple Pathways Research and Development: Summary Findings and Strategic Solutions for Overage, Under-Credited Youth*
Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (2006)
New York: New York City Department of Education
http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B5EC6D1C-F88A-4610-8F0F-A14D63420115/0/FindingsofOMPG.pdf
http://icohere-presentations.com/nystatesummit/pdf/MultiplePathwaysToGraduation.pdf
http://forumfyi.org/files/back_on_track_report1.pdf

The Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation developed a comprehensive strategic plan with financial support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and analytic support from the Boston-based Parthenon Group. The resulting dataset, representing an unprecedented examination of student experience within a school system, has been critical to system transformation grounded in student population needs. Insights gained through this first strategic planning engagement have led to internal and foundation support for continued analysis to inform comprehensive secondary planning.

The Multiple Pathways portfolio of school and program models designed to serve overage, under-credited youth include Transfer High Schools Young Adult Borough Centers, full- and part-time GED programs, and Learning to Work, each of which is described below. In the New York City Department of Education there are currently 25 Transfer High Schools that serve OA/UC students, 20 Young Adult Borough Centers, and over 100 GED programs. Learning to Work is integrated across the Multiple Pathways portfolio and is located at 22 sites. These schools and programs are located throughout the Department as Alternative Schools and Programs, Regional Schools, Empowerment Schools, or Charter Schools.

*Evaluation of New York City's Learning to Work Initiative for Over-Age and Under-Credited High School Youth: Student Outcomes (2005–2008)*
Manuel Gutiérrez, et al. (June 2010)
New York: Metis Associates
http://www.metisassoc.com/publications/downloads/Metis_06-10_LearningtoWorkEvaluationReport.pdf

An analysis conducted by The Parthenon Group for the NYC Department of Education (DOE) found that nearly all high school dropouts from NYC schools have a history of being over-age and under-credited (OA-UC), and that approximately half of all entering freshmen become OA-UC during high school. An estimated 140,000 young people, both in and out of school, are considered to be at least 2 years behind their expected age and credit accumulation in relation to graduation requirements. That study also found that the OA-UC population included students who entered

high school with sufficient literacy skills as well as students with low literacy levels (NYCDOE, 2006).

This final report presents findings of the evaluation of the LTW initiative conducted by Metis Associates. It includes a discussion of what the literature in the field says about the practices, policies, and programs that are experiencing some successes in working with youth, and reports the results of a longitudinal analysis of NYCDOE's LTW program outcomes.

## The Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy

*Alternative Education: Exploring Innovations in Learning*
(June 2014)
http://www.renniecenter.org/research/AlternativeEducation.pdf

In this policy brief, the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy provides a first-of-its-kind baseline assessment of Massachusetts' alternative education offerings. This description and analysis of existing alternative practices in the Commonwealth helps to understand how programming for the state's at-risk students might be improved and how those innovations might be leveraged to guide broader, system-wide reform. Sample findings are summarized here.

*Forgotten Youth: Re-Engaging Students Through Dropout Recovery*
(November 2012)
http://www.renniecenter.org/research/ForgottenYouthExecSum.pdf
http://www.renniecenter.org/research/ForgottenYouth.pdf

Interactive Map
http://www.renniecenter.org/maps/ForgottenYouthMap.html

The Rennie Center's new policy brief, *Forgotten Youth: Re-Engaging Students Through Dropout Recovery*, explores dropout recovery, the act of re-engaging and re-enrolling youth who leave school before graduating. Research shows that out-of-school youth frequently want to return to school and continue their education, but lack the knowledge or means to do so. Promising approaches for addressing this include creating dropout recovery programs outside of traditional school settings that specialize in meeting and overcoming the challenges faced by out-of-school youth, and providing returning students with an appropriate menu of educational options to lead to a high school diploma or equivalent.

Follow this link to explore an interactive map providing information about a variety of dropout recovery programs in the United States. These dropout recovery programs address the unique needs of out-of-school youth by focusing on: maintaining a focus on students' future after high school; allowing individualized and flexible academic programs; taking a needs-based and supportive approach; and integrating/linking to community organizations. The purpose of this map is to highlight examples of how dropout recovery is used as a strategy to increase the graduation rate across the country.

## WestEd

*Reenrollment of High School Dropouts in a Large, Urban School District*

BethAnn Berliner, Vanessa Barrat, Tony Fong, and Paul B. Shirk (July 2008)
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/pdf/REL_2008056.pdf

This study, prepared by REL West, follows a cohort of first-time 9th graders in one large urban school district from 2001/02 to 2005/06 and documents dropout, reenrollment, and graduation rates. For the one third of dropouts who reenrolled in the district over that period, it reports course credit accrual and graduation outcomes as well as students' reasons for dropping out, and the <mark>challenges districts face with reenrollment</mark>. In addition to the full report, a two-page synopsis, *What Happens to High School Dropouts Who Reenroll?*, is available.

*Speak Out, Listen Up! Tools for Using Student Perspectives*
*and Local Data for School Improvement*
Jennifer Harris, Laura Davidson, Ben Hayes, Kelly Humphreys, and Paul LaMarca: Washoe County School District & BethAnn Berliner, Leslie Poynor, and Lori Van Houten: REL West (July 2014)
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/pdf/REL_2014035.pdf

Listening closely to what students say about their school experiences can be beneficial to educators for understanding and addressing school-related topics and problems and rethinking policies and practices. The purpose of this <mark>toolkit</mark> is to provide educators with a purposeful and systematic way to elicit and listen to student voice to inform school improvement efforts. School improvement is complex work that relies on multiple sources of information to frame challenges and address and monitor change efforts. Student voice brings an additional, important source of information to these efforts. The toolkit offers three tools:

(1) ASK (Analyzing Surveys with Kids) involves students in analyzing and interpreting survey results associated with a school-related topic or problem and then producing suggestions for school improvement.
(2) Inside-Outside Fishbowl organizes a special kind of focus group in which students and educators trade roles as speakers and listeners during a facilitated discussion of a school-related topic or problem, and jointly develop an action plan.
(3) S4 (Students Studying Students' Stories) guides a digital storytelling process in which students produce and analyze videotaped interviews of other students about a school-related topic or problem and then host forums with educators to suggest improvements.

The toolkit includes detailed information about how the tools work, the questions they address, the number and types of participants needed, the amount of time required, space and materials considerations, and directions for using the tools. It also includes a tool template so schools and districts can create new student voice tools for their particular needs and interests.