



Presentation materials and resources that support youth at-risk are provided in this section. These materials may be used for technical assistance, training and professional development purposes with a wide variety of audiences.

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Professional Development

Introduction: Ensuring the Inclusion of At-Risk Youth

Many states have a long-standing commitment to serving individuals with diverse educational needs, which is reflected in their state legislation and local procedures. Nevertheless, many challenges have persisted which have limited the utilization of strategies and approaches in supporting the participation of all learners in education and workforce reform efforts. State, regional, and local partnerships must continue to identify the barriers, issues, and concerns that limit participation and develop strategies and supports for ensuring all youth, including those most “at-risk”, access and benefit from the full range of School-to-Career/Work opportunities. Largely based on Colorado’s Transition Systems Change process, some suggested strategies to support planning and system implementation to include at-risk youth are those that are based on the key principals of equity, inclusion, and equal access. They include the following:

- Coordinate programs and resources, including those traditionally aligned with learners with disabilities, dropouts, economically disadvantaged learners, and other at-risk youth populations as cited in this manual (Risky Business), to create a single, unified School-to-Career/Work system.
- Promote equity, access, and inclusion in all marketing and public relations activities.
- Ensure the involvement and participation of parents, advocacy groups, and consumers on all advisory councils, task forces, and planning efforts associated with state, regional, and local partnerships.
- Formulate performance standards that guide local partnerships in establishing comprehensive systems.
- Build local capacity to serve all youth through technical assistance, training, and professional development, information/product dissemination and other assistance.
- Promote the use of accommodations, assistive technology, and support services in all aspects of School-to-Career/Work system planning and implementation.
- Follow-up and evaluate the overall impact of the School-to-Career/Work system on academic/social development and post-school outcomes, i.e., post-secondary education, training, and employment for all youth.

“The solutions for adult problems tomorrow depends in large measure upon the way our children grow up today. There is no greater insight into the future than recognizing when we save our children, we save ourselves.”

~ Margaret Mead



The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 requires the development of partnerships to build school-to-work systems that serve all youth. The enterprise of these state, regional, and local partnerships might best be facilitated through a collaborative planning process.

THE COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS

This section is intended to provide state, regional, and local system planners with strategies for assessing the current status of including at-risk youth in School-to-Career/Work activities, setting goals for improving results, and revising existing plans or establishing new action plans to meet their goals. This approach assumes that state, regional, and local partnerships work within the framework of a collaborative planning process. It is through the collaborative planning process, and the implementation of continuous review and improvement strategies, that School-to-Career/Work systems will effectively serve all youth.

In Colorado, systems change efforts have utilized a process known as “Compression Planning” over the past 10 years. Designed by the McNellis Company in New Brighton, Pennsylvania, Compression Planning is a storyboarding process that requires a team of key people to resolve their issues within hours or days, not weeks or months. This process draws out each individual’s ideas, focuses on the best of them, shapes a course of action, and establishes a schedule for which the participants hold themselves accountable. A major intent of the Compression Planning process is to help individuals, groups and companies focus more clearly, work together more effectively and produce quality results based on consensus, commitment and accountability. Compression Planning produces innovation, speed and teambuilding by blending collaborative planning and leadership concepts with group process methodology. It results in open, creative planning which formulates the best thinking from participants while maintaining the structure and organization needed for useful and effective action. Identifying needs, setting goals, and developing action plans are best accomplished through a compression planning/collaborative planning process.

State, regional, and local partnerships have evolved through federal and state legislation, mandates, rules that govern program development (e.g., Tech Prep Consortia, youth apprenticeships, Private Industry Councils, Workforce Development Councils, Youth Councils, and others), and a desire to collaborate toward increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of services. In many states, the commitment and leadership of partners is viewed as a primary strategy to achieve systemic change. The planning process is an important part of developing a successful partnership to implement education reform efforts such as School-to-Career/Work. The success of these efforts is largely dependent on knowledge of programmatic content, the change process, and action planning strategies.

School-to-Career/Work partnerships must establish a process by which responsibilities and expectations of students, parents, employers, and schools are clearly delineated (School-to-Work Opportunities Act, 1994). There are several elements critical to developing an effective action plan. The planning process used to create and evaluate the constantly evolving action plan is key to its success. Although the elements and/or activities involved in planning seem to be consistent, there are many different strategies, which can be used to implement and engage them. Some key activities within an effective collaborative planning process might include the following:

- Building awareness of the need for School-to-Career/Work and conducting community, employer, and school-wide needs assessments.
- Assessing the status and commitment to serving youth with diverse educational needs.
- Appropriating stakeholder involvement in all partnership activities.
- Identifying the mission of the state, regional, and local School-to-Career/Work partnership and developing a shared vision around the initiative.
- Establishing a School-to-Career/Work action plan which articulates the expected results, anticipated barriers, action steps, responsible parties, timelines, resources, and follow-up/evaluation for each of the goals and/or objectives within the state, regional, and local School-to-Career/Work partnerships.
- Evaluating the overall effectiveness of the action plan and work plan by comparing efforts with other standards such as the benchmarking process.
- Communicating progress made on goals and objectives to community stakeholders and engaging in a continuous review and rearticulation of the School-to-Career/Work action plan.

COMPRESSION PLANNING: ACTION PLAN FOR INVOLVING AT-RISK YOUTH

For the purposes of illustration, the following chart demonstrates a condensed format for developing an Action Plan that specifically addresses goals for including at-risk youth in School-to-Career/Work activities. The goals and objectives would, in this case, have been developed from a prior assessment process. This plan would articulate expected results, provide action steps, identify responsible parties, set timelines, identify resources, and provide follow-up and evaluation.

The following example displays a small portion of an action plan that was developed from a local partnership in Montrose, Colorado, in August 1999.
 (Standards-Based Transition Process Workshop, Montrose County School District RE-1J)

Action Plan for Involving At-Risk Youth

GOAL: *Develop written procedures on how student's with IEPs, which provides for expanded standards, will earn credit to graduate in regular education classes.*

Objective	Action Steps Activities	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Evaluation
Expand course offerings/titles for graduation credit within core departments	Weighting Carnegie units and standards	Departments	Dec. 1 each year	State Department	State Assessment Survey (longitudinal)
	Align and create coursework to transition/career goals	Departments	Present and ongoing	Other School Districts	Graduation Rate
	Define diploma	Administration School Board		District Assessment	Dropout Rate
Materials and class supplies	Materials and class supplies	Departments Administration		Discover Program	State Assessment Scores
	Committee representatives will present strategies			State Assessment Advisors	
Inform staff on progress	Inform staff on progress	School Board		Course Catalog	

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: OVERHEAD PRESENTATIONS FROM TEXT

This section includes additional professional development resources for working collaboratively in a variety of settings. Public and private sector professionals and community leaders who share a desire to work more collaboratively to achieve better results for at-risk youth and their families will find these materials to be an invaluable training program.

This training helps schools, families, businesses, agencies, communities, and organizations to better understand and successfully apply at-risk youth innovations and strategies that develop and strengthen networking relationships across systems. Working from the text, overhead slides for each section have been developed to help individuals to navigate through issues, supports, infrastructure, and results for at-risk youth. These resources, in addition to others developed throughout this manual, provide rich information to help guide individuals and organizations through a process of building successful partnerships that support youth at-risk. These materials provide practical solutions to the challenges that may arise as groups move through the collaborative planning process; and help to ensure the inclusion of at-risk youth while providing a full range of opportunities and resources.

“The most important thing you leave behind is the stuff that turns into treasures when children find them.”

~ Brian Andreas

Risky Business

Building Resources for At-Risk Youth

Introduction

Developed by
Alexander “Sandy” Thomson



Who are At-Risk Youth?

- Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 defines an at-risk student as one . . .

“who, because of limited English proficiency, poverty, race, geographic location, or economic disadvantage, faces a greater risk of low educational achievement or reduced academic expectations..”



What Causes a Person to Be “At-Risk”?

- Certain factors in a student’s personal circumstances and/or behavior interact negatively with the school culture and the surrounding community.
- At-risk youth are those whose prospects for becoming productive members of society look obscure and thus, they are not prepared to be successful in school and/or adult life.



Issues for Youth At-Risk

- There is a mismatch between student needs and the structure of schools
- Schools may focus on remediation and deficits rather than student strengths, interests and talents
- Students are not at-risk until they have been identified as such by adults
- Community and “hands on” experiences may not be integrated within the school curriculum
- There are no quick fixes



At-Risk Youth & School-to-Work/Career

School-to-Work Opportunities Act:

- Includes ALL youth
- Integrates academics and careers
- Encourages post-secondary education
- Increases opportunities for those at-risk of dropping out and/or working at low-skill, low-wage jobs



Integrated Systems

Integrated systems provide proven results in serving youth at-risk:

- Interagency collaboration is essential in providing support for youth at-risk
- Sharing resources, strategies and personnel across systems results in positive outcomes for these youth
- Colorado endorses a network of integrated systems



Risky Business

Building Resources for At-Risk Youth

Section 1: Overview

Developed by
Alexander “Sandy” Thomson



Youth At-Risk: Overview

The need to focus on at-risk youth:

- Quality and Equality
- Escalation of the Problem
- Demands of the Workforce
- Social Development
- New Role of the School
- Restrictive Attitudes
- Legal Responsibilities



Educational Goals to Support Youth At-Risk

- Focus on Student Assets
- Utilize Varied Teaching Strategies
- Create Meaningful Learning in Collaborative Settings
- Emphasize High Expectations for ALL Students
- Connect content to culture and prior knowledge
- Use context to teach content
- Develop thinking skills
- Provide multiple instructional and assessment strategies
- Eliminate student tracking



Educational Goals to Support Youth At-Risk

- Foster resiliency - build on strengths
- Administrative leadership and support
- Professional development opportunities
- Parent and community involvement
- Promote a caring, strength-based school and community climate



School-to-Career & At-Risk Youth

School-to-Career/Work:

- Focuses on student strengths and interests
- Provides “hands-on” learning experiences
- Shows the relevancy of academics
- Assists students in developing positive work habits and attitudes
- Expands future options and possibilities



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Building Resources for At-Risk Youth

Section 2:

School-to-Career Innovations & Strategies

Developed by
Alexander “Sandy” Thomson



School-to-Career Innovations & Strategies

- Limited English Proficient
- Out-of-School
- Gifted and Talented
- Native American
- Gender Equity
- Youth with Disabilities
- Youth Corrections
- Migrant Education
- Disadvantaged
- All Students
- Charter Schools
- One-Stop Career Centers



School-to-Career Innovations & Strategies

Strategies Focus On:

- Creative forms of teaching and learning
- Guidance and counseling with rich connections to the workplace
- Adult support, structure and expectations
- Quality implementation of youth programs
- Youth as resources to issues and solutions
- Support, follow-up and evaluation



School-to-Career Innovations & Strategies

Each At-Risk Category Contains:

- Three Colorado Programs/Strategies
- Two National Programs/Strategies
- One International Program/Strategy



School-to-Career Innovations & Strategies

Each At-Risk Category Contains:

- Program name and location
- Primary target group
- Who else can benefit
- Purpose of the program
- Description and methodology
- Special considerations
- Results and effects
- Contact information



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Building Resources for At-Risk Youth

Section 3: Family, Community & Business Involvement

Developed by
Alexander “Sandy” Thomson

Used with permission from
Learn and Live, 1997

The George Lucas Educational Foundation



Involving Families

Developing a home-school team will . . .

- Increase communication
- Reinforce the importance of learning
- Develop trust and respect
- Inspire staff & students
- Create a positive attitude about school
- Provide a forum for addressing critical issues



Connecting Communities

Community involvement in school will . . .

- Provide ongoing support for the schools
- Establish role models and mentors for students
- Increase communication and mutual respect
- Strengthen families and communities
- Make the school a community center



Business Partnerships

Involving business in the schools will . . .

- Create work-based learning environments
- Increase access to state-of-the-art technologies
- Make academic subjects relevant & enriching
- Increase post-school options for students
- Provide ongoing support for the school system



Risky Business

Building Resources for At-Risk Youth

Section 4:

Guidelines to Safe Schools & Integrated Services

Developed by
Alexander “Sandy” Thomson

Used with permission from

U.S. Department of Education and Colorado Department of Education



Guide to Safe Schools

Characteristics of Safe Schools

From the U. S. Department of Education:

- Focus on achievement
- Involve families in meaningful ways
- Develop links to the community
- Emphasize positive relationships
- Openly discuss safety issues
- Treat students with respect



Guide to Safe Schools

Characteristics of Safe Schools

- Create a way for students to share concerns and feelings
- Support students transition from school to adult life and the workplace
- Offer extended day programs
- Assist abused and neglected students
- Promote good citizenship
- Identify problems and solutions



Early Warning Signs

Characteristics of Students At-risk of Violence

- Social withdrawal
- Feeling isolated & alone
- Feeling rejected & persecuted
- Uncontrolled anger
- History of discipline problems
- Drug and/or alcohol use
- Intolerance for differences – prejudice
- Access to firearms
- Victim of violence
- Low school interest



Intervention Strategies

- Coordinate services
- Inform parents
- Maintain confidentiality
- Develop capacity to respond
- Support students being responsible for their behavior
- Simplify the system for assistance



What Students Can Do

- Listen to friends' feelings
- Share concerns and get help from adults
- Create organizations to prevent violence
- Get involved in the school
- Volunteer to mentor a younger student
- Report any incidents
- Be a role model



Responding to a Crisis

- Have a crisis plan
- Look for early warning signs
- Get help for troubled students
- Ensure safety during a crisis
- Provide support to staff, students and parents after the incident
- Evaluate crisis plan and adjust as needed



Risky Business

Building Resources for At-Risk Youth

Section 5:
Professional Development
Developed by
Alexander “Sandy” Thomson



Professional Development

- Concepts and strategies designed to support youth at-risk should be integrated into all professional development activities
- Developing a proactive approach will improve the outcomes for students who are in danger of failing in school and in life



Professional Development

Action Steps for Youth At-Risk

- Survey students to determine effective engagement practices
- Develop a student assistance team
- Formulate a crisis plan
- Provide information to staff on at-risk youth
- Develop a parent/community involvement program
- Implement a preventative model of intervention



Professional Development

Action Steps for Youth At-Risk

- Address wrap-around integrated services
- Review curriculum and instruction practices and determine how these match learning styles for youth at-risk
- Develop instructional practices that assist students in seeing the relevance of academic instruction
- Initiate strategies to engage business and the community



A “Reclaiming Environment”

Communicates four core values:

- Belonging – Significance is fostered through our universal need for belonging.
- Mastery – Competence is achieved through opportunities for mastery.
- Independence – Empowerment is nurtured through independence.
- Generosity – Integrity and virtue is reflected through generosity.



Collaboration

- Collaboration and cooperation not only makes sense, it may well mean the difference between survival in the year 2000 and beyond or obsolescence in the 1990's.
- We've seen agencies, programs, services and systems come and go, the criteria for the comings and goings are often vague, but rest assured that we have a new criteria, not vague but well defined, that will be applied, and that criteria is the measure of cooperation and collaboration that an organization exhibits, in short, the degree to which a system is able to network.



Eight Lessons Learned From Educational Systems Change

- You can't mandate what matters
- Change is a journey, not a blueprint
- Problems are friends
- Vision & strategic planning come later
- Individualism & collectivism have equal power
- Neither centralization or decentralization work
- Connection with the wider environment is critical to success
- Every person is a change agent

~ Michael Fullan, 1993



Web Sites

- Colorado Department of Education
www.cde.state.co.us
- Standards and Assessment Resource Bank
www.cde.state.co.us/stand.htm
- Colorado School-to-Career Partnership
www.state.co.us/ed_dir/stc
- Colorado School-to-Career for Youth with Disabilities
www.aclin.org/other/education/disability
- National School-to-Work Learning Center
www.stw.ed.gov



