Implementing Effective Dropout Prevention Practices

Presented by:
Marlene Darwin, Ph.D.
American Institutes for Research (AIR)
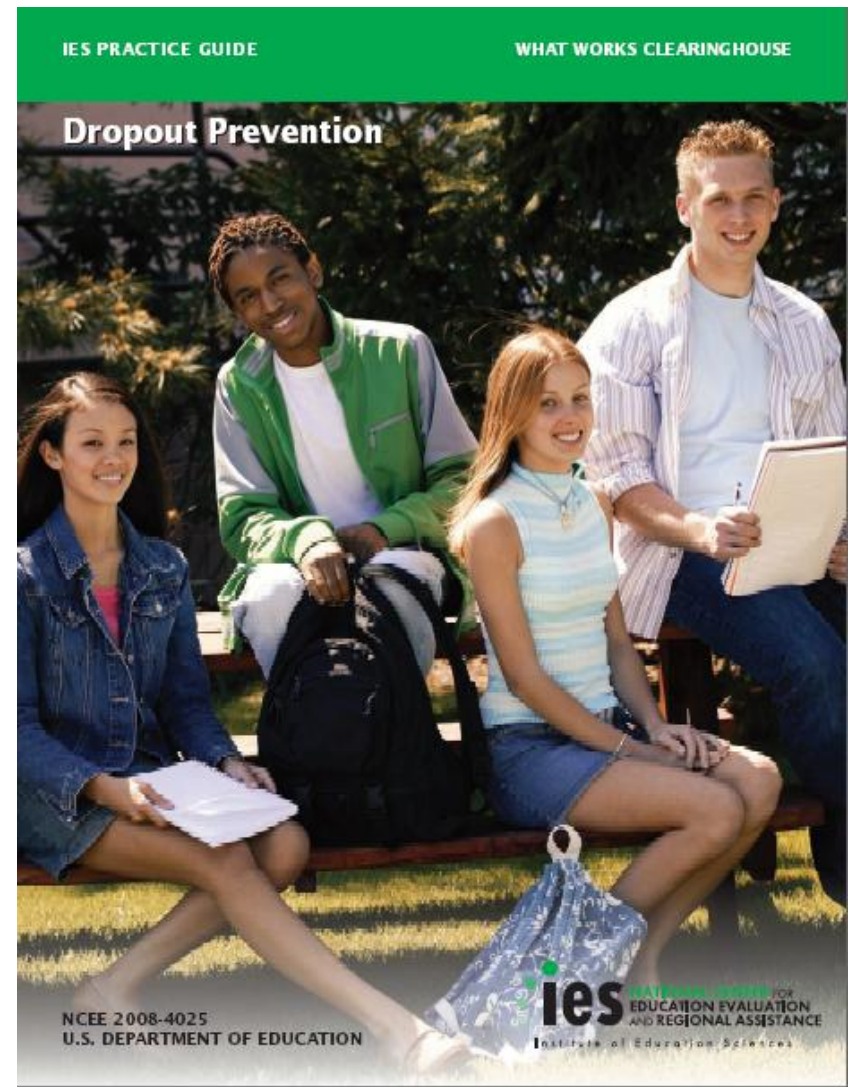
DOINGWHATW**O**RKS

Dropout Prevention Practice Guide

- Introduce Doing What Works (DWW)

- Explain each of the recommended practices

- Show selected media from schools

- Provide tools for implementation
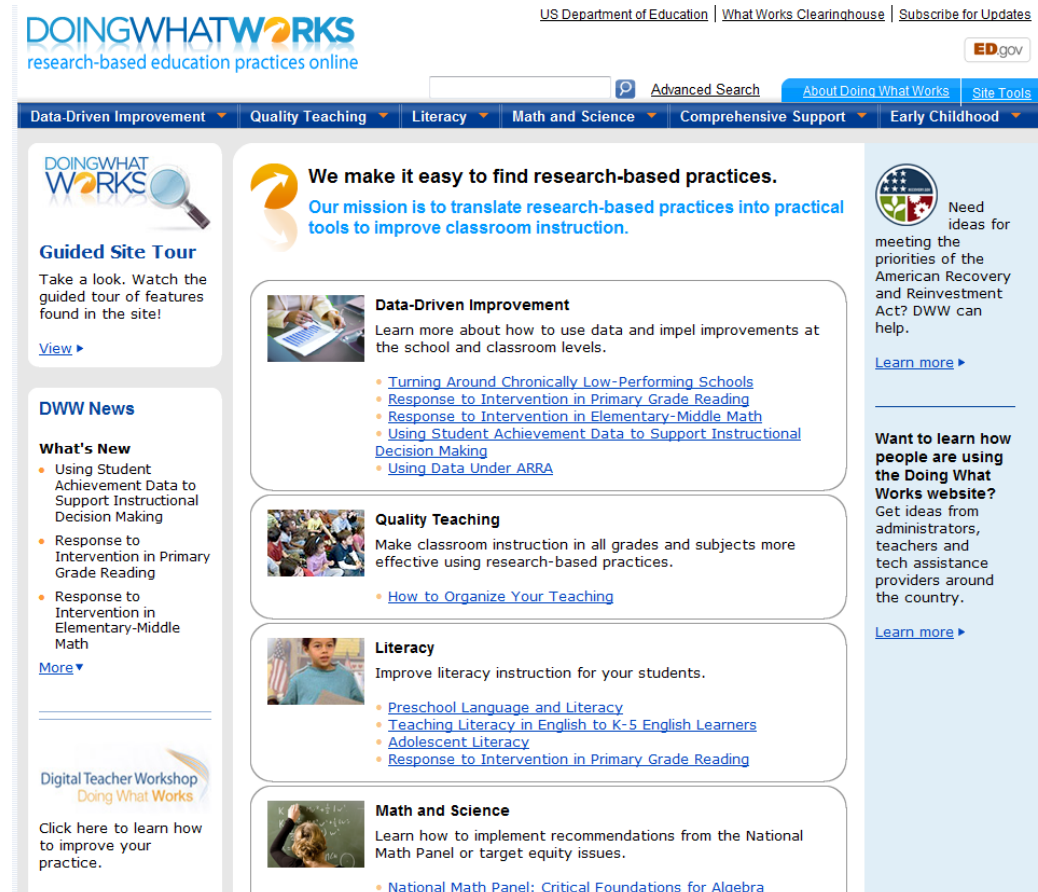
- Stimulate thinking about next steps

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DWW Goal

Translate research-based practices into examples and practical tools that support and improve classroom instruction

DOINGWHATWORKS

Overview of DWW

- Free resource from the U.S. Department of Education

- Developed by WestEd, AIR, & RMC.

- Starts with IES research reviews.

Builds a **bridge from research to action**

DOINGWHATW RKS

Dropout Prevention

Includes these recommended practices

Data Systems

Adult Advocates

Academic Supports

Social/Behavior Programs

Learning Environment

Rigorous/Relevant Instruction

Dropout Prevention

This Practice Guide was developed by an expert panel convened by the Institute of Education Sciences. It is designed to help educators

▶ Start

Multimedia Overview

Dropout Prevention: Keeping Students in School

Use this multimedia overview to learn about practices for Dropout Prevention. Through diagnosis of the problem, providing targeted interventions, and establishing schoolwide programs, schools can create research-based and practical solutions to keep students in school, reduce dropout rates and recover students who left school. **(7:15 min)**

Explore these recommended practices:

› **Data Systems**
Use data systems to identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.

› **Adult Advocates**
Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out.

› **Academic Supports**
Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.

› **Social/Behavior Programs**
Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills.

› **Learning Environment**
Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.

› **Rigorous/Relevant Instruction**
Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to engage students and build skills.

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Topic Page:
-**Expert Interviews**
-**Multimedia Overview**
-**Planning Templates**
-**Related Links**
-**Visual Diagram**

Overview Media & Materials
State/District Policy & Planning
Related Links

Visual Diagram

Dropout Prevention

This diagram represents the strategies for districts and schools to understand the scope of the dropout problem and design a coordinated and coherent approach targeted to the needs of the students. The six recommended practices operate best as part of a systemic strategy to address dropout prevention and recovery.

DOWNLOAD DIAG

Expert Interview

Understanding Dr

Mark Dynarski, Ph.
Mathematica Policy

This interview feat
chair of the expert
Practice Guide. Dr.
of the Dropout Pre
six recommendation

Start

Play Video

Overview Media & Materials
State/District Policy & Planning
Related Links

Planning Templates

States and districts can support all six practices for dropout prevention through policies and activities. Use the planning templates below to assess needs and plan systematically for activities. The planning templates can also be used to develop and communicate policies that support planning and technical assistance.

Planning Template #1: Working With State Education Agencies

This planning template for state-level personnel suggests ways to help districts and schools develop a comprehensive and coherent dropout prevention plan. It covers state leadership, standards and expectations, recommending research-based resources, teacher quality, support systems for districts and schools, and fiscal policies.

DOWNLOAD TOOL | WORD | 139 KB

Planning Template #2: Working With Districts

This planning template for district-level personnel offers key actions to help districts develop a comprehensive and coherent dropout prevention plan. It covers district leadership, research-based instructional strategies, teacher quality, enrichment programs, and engaging families and the community.

DOWNLOAD TOOL | WORD | 137 KB

Planning Template #3: Working With Schools

This planning template, aimed for school- and district-level personnel, offers key actions in the development of a comprehensive and coherent dropout prevention plan. It covers leadership, instructional feedback, and organizational practices, teacher quality, monitoring of instruction, use of data for planning, collaborating with families and the community, and ensuring a supportive learning environment.

DOWNLOAD TOOL | WORD | 147 KB

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Recommended Practices

- Diagnostic Practices
  - Data System

- Targeted Interventions
  - Adult Advocates
  - Academic Supports
  - Social/Behavioral Supports

- Schoolwide Practices
  - Learning Environment
  - Rigorous and Relevant Instruction

DOINGWHATWORKS

For Each Practice:

Learn What Works

- Key concepts
- Research Base
- Expert interviews

See How it Works

- Featured Schools
- Media products: Audio and Video interviews, Classroom footage, Slideshows
- Sample Materials

Do What Works

- Ideas for action
- Tools and templates

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Practice 1

Use Data Systems to Identify Individual Students at Risk of Dropping Out

Use data systems to identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.

A critical first step for preventing dropouts is for the school leaders to examine such data as graduation rate, attendance, overage and undercredited students, and students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and to look at these data disaggregated by race and gender. In this way, the school can better understand the scope of the pr...

School leaders and teachers can use data to help prevent students from fa... intervene immediately if students do fall off track. Looking at the data on s... grade retention, low academic achievement, and behavior problems can tel... students are at risk of dropping out. If the numbers are very large, the sch... adopting schoolwide changes and/or targeted programs for individual stude... highest risk of dropping out.

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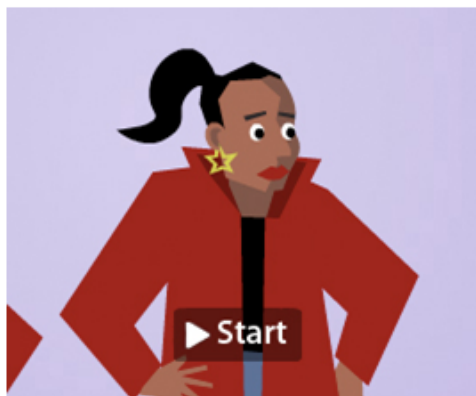
Multimedia Overview

Utilizing Data Systems fo Prevention

This multimedia overview ill... collecting and analyzing st... Learn how data can be eff... prevent dropouts. **(6:04 mi...**

⊕ TRANSCRIPT & DETAILS | F...

Key Concepts   Research Evidence   Related Links

Key Concepts

Use longitudinal, student-level data to form an accurate picture of graduation and dropout rates.

Utilize longitudinal student databases with unique statewide identifiers for individual students that follow them through high school entry to graduation or dropout. The databases allow policymakers and educators to measure graduation and dropout rates.

Use data to identify incoming students with histories of academic problems, truancy, behavioral problems, and retentions.

Review incoming students' attendance records, grade retention, disciplinary records, and academic assessments.

Monitor the academic and social performance of all students continually.

Review student transcripts, test scores, and discipline referrals regularly to quickly identify students who are falling off-track and to intervene immediately for those students. The burden of data monitoring can be reduced by using automated alerts in electronic data systems to call attention to students whose behavior or progress suggests an increased risk of dropping out.

Review student-level data to identify students at risk of dropping out before key academic transitions.

Research indicates that students are more likely to drop out of school following a transition to high school, and they can be flagged early for risk of dropping out. Schools should regularly pay particular attention to students who have failed courses, encountered frequent disciplinary problems, or been chronically absent.

Monitor students' sense of engagement and belonging in school.

Survey students periodically or conduct purposefully selected small-group interviews to learn about students' perceptions of school climate and their sense of belonging and engagement. Schools also can cover topics such as supportiveness of the school environment, perceptions of safety, academic rigor, and interactions with adults and other students.

Collect and document accurate information on student withdrawals.

Districts can provide unique identifiers for students and policies for assigning them at the state level so that dropout rates are counted accurately. Codes indicating a transfer to another school should be used only when enrollment in the other school has been verified.

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See How it Works

- [Freshman On Track Indicator](#)
  - Less than two F's
  - Five credits in the freshman year)
  - Predict with 80% accuracy
- Other Indicators
  - Course grades
  - Absences
  - School Climate

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Practice 2

Assign Adult Advocates to Students at Risk of Dropping Out

Adult Advocates

Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out.

Research has shown that sustained personal relationships between trained adults and at-risk students can help address students' personal and academic needs. Advocates can address the academic and social needs of students by building trust and helping students overcome obstacles such as low academic performance, poor attendance, ⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻ ⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻ with teachers. Advocates also can communicate and work cooperativ⸻ ⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻ should be committed to advocating for the student and should b⸻ ⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻ succeed. The adult and student should have time to meet regula⸻ ⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻ should be prepared to be persistent. Training for adult advocate⸻ ⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻

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Multimedia Ove⸻

Assigning Adult⸻
Academic and S⸻

Watch this multi⸻
the benefits of a⸻
students. This ov⸻
conditions for th⸻
this practice. **(6:⸻**

⬇ TRANSCRIPT & ⸻

Learn What Works

Key Concepts | Research Evidence | Related Links

Key Concepts

Choose adults who are committed to investing in the students' personal and academic success; keep caseloads low, and purposefully match students with adult advocates.

The adult advocate needs to be able to devote time and energy to multiple facets of the student's life. The adult advocate does not need to be a member of the school staff; he or she should be based primarily at the school and should embody key personal characteristics including persistence, belief in the ability of students to succeed, and the ability to work cooperatively.

Establish regular time in the school day or week for students to meet with the adult.

Consistent meetings between the advocate and the student provide accountability and the opportunity for the advocate to suggest guidance or praise successes. Students also need time to communicate details about personal encounters. Students whose problems are severe may require more time and attention than students who have less serious issues.

Provide adult advocates with guidance and training about how to work with students, parents, or school staff to address the problem.

Orientation and training for adults are critical to the success of the student-advocate relationship. Training should include information about resources available to assist the student and family. The level of training required may depend on the student's needs.
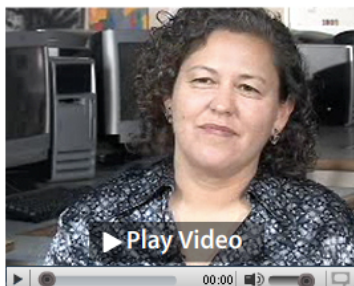
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Practice 3

Provide Academic Support and Enrichment to Improve Academic Performance

Project-Based Learning

Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.

Expert Interview

Academic Interventions to Increase Student Success
Monica R. Martinez, Ph.D.
KnowledgeWorks Foundation

Watch this expert interview with Dr. Monica Martinez to learn about the elements of academic support to struggling students, including extra time, extra support, and individualized attention. **(3:55 min)**

⊙ DOWNLOAD VIDEO | QUICKTIME | 70 MB
⊙ TRANSCRIPT & DETAILS | PDF | 131 KB

Key Concepts   **Research Evidence**   **Related Links**

Key Concepts

Provide individual or small group support in test-taking skills, study skills, or target subject areas such as reading, writing, or math.

Academic support can happen through one-on-one interactions or small group interactions, and can include test-taking and study skills or enrichment courses. Academic support can be conducted by adults or peers, and can occur during advisory periods, lunch, or during study skills periods built into the schedule.

Provide extra study time and opportunities for credit recovery and accumulation through after-school, Saturday school, or summer enrichment programs.

Academic support can include test-taking and study skills or enrichment courses. Academic support can be conducted by adults or peers, and can occur during study skills periods built into the schedule. Schools can provide intensive extra help programs at the end of the first quarter for students who have failed. Immediate interventions may help students move back on track and prevent subsequent course failure.

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① **Academic Supports**

Recovering Credits Through Project-Based Learning
Foxfire Center for Student Success (OH)

Foxfire Center for Student Success has developed a project-based learning system which allows students to earn credits towards graduation through high-interest projects. The project-based education encourages students at Foxfire to earn the credits needed for graduation. The following sample material, *Project-Based Learning*, provides an example of a project-based unit. Teachers use these additional sample materials, *Unit 1 Map, Lesson Plan Template*, and *Standards-Based Assessment* to guide instructional planning. **(5:07 min)**

⊙ DOWNLOAD VIDEO | QUICKTIME | 33 MB
⊙ TRANSCRIPT & DETAILS | PDF | 137 KB

Presentations

Small Group Academic Support Through Humanities Teams
The ninth/tenth grade Humanities Team at Sleepy Hollow was created to support students at risk of failing in ninth grade.

Interviews

Recovering Credits Through Project-Based Learning
Foxfire Center for Student Success has developed a project-based learning system which allows students to earn credits towards graduation through high-interest projects.

Providing Academic Support in Core Content Subjects
Academic supports provided in core content areas at Western Hills University High School help students meet the requirements of each course.

Sample Materials

📄 **Lesson Plan Template**
📄 **Unit 1 Map**
📄 **Standards-Based Assessment**
📄 **Project-Based Learning**

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Practice 4

Implement Programs to Improve Students' Classroom Behavior and Social Skills

Do What Works

Key Concepts

Employ adult advocates or other engaged adults to help students establish attainable academic and behavioral goals with specific benchmarks.

Adult advocates, mentors, teachers, or counselors can help students determine realistic goals for interacting with peers and teachers at school, academic progress, or related areas for improvement. Students can learn to take responsibility for their behavior by setting personal benchmarks such as "turn in daily homework."

Teacher Self-Reflection

Recognize student accomplishments.

School administrators and staff can provide frequent positive rewards and recogn accomplishments based on the students' progress towards goals. In this way, stu are rewarded for small successes. Two examples include holding recognition cere making positive phone calls to a student's home.

Ideas for Action   **Tools & Templates**

Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills.

These tools and templates help you use the materials in the "Learn What" and "See How" sections as you tackle the hard work of school improvement. Each tool is a downloadable Word document that you can edit and adapt to serve your needs.

Practice Tools

Teach strategies to strengthen problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Schools can integrate problem-solving or decision-making curricula with the exist curricula or have students participate in a life skills course. Students should be e to topics such as problem recognition and evaluation, goal setting, planning and organization, anticipating roadblocks, and expressing emotion.

Learning Together: Improving Classroom Behavior and Social Skills

Use the framework in this tool for in-service about promoting social skills and positive behavior of students at risk of dropping out of school.

⊕ DOWNLOAD TOOL | WORD | 126 KB

Teacher Self-Reflection: Promoting Social-Emotional Learning

Use this tool to reflect on current classroom practices aimed at promoting positive behavior in all students, including students at risk of dropping out of school.

⊕ DOWNLOAD TOOL | WORD | 149 KB

Establish partnerships with community-based program providers and other such as social services, welfare, mental health, and law enforcement.

Coordination with social services, child welfare, and law enforcement agencies to meet students' needs outside of school alleviates problems that present themselv during school hours.

School Self-Reflection: Improving Students' Behavior and Social Skills

Use this reflection tool to reflect on current school-level practices aimed at promoting positive behavior in students at risk of dropping out of school.

⊕ DOWNLOAD TOOL | WORD | 130 KB

Planning Templates

Social/Behavior Programs is also addressed in each of three comprehensive planning templates that include all six practices for Dropout Prevention. An overview describes how these planning templates can be used by a technical assistance provider or other support providers working with schools on the implementation of a dropout prevention plan.

Planning Template #1: Working With State Education Agencies

⊕ DOWNLOAD TOOL | WORD | 139 KB

Learn What Works

Planning Template #2: Working With Districts

⊕ DOWNLOAD TOOL | WORD | 137 KB

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Practice 5

Personalize the Learning Environment and Instructional Process

Key Concepts

Establish small learning communities.

Small learning communities can be implemented for one grade level or as a whole school reform model. The students may be housed in a separate wing or floor of the school building, with core-academic teams that share the same students. Each small learning community consists of an interdisciplinary team of teachers with whom students work consistently.

Establish team teaching.

Pairing teachers as partners in the classroom has benefits for personalizing the learning environment. Not only can teachers conduct common lesson planning and decision-making about the classroom, but students have access to more than one teacher who can offer individualized attention or new perspectives for the student.

Create smaller classes.

Lowering the number of students in the class allows for teachers to interact with students on an individual level more frequently. Having fewer students in the classroom also allows students to feel a greater sense of belonging in the classroom.

Create extended time through changes to the school schedule.

Implementing innovative schedule features, such as block scheduling, extended class periods, or advisory and study periods, provides more time for student-teacher and student-student interactions during the day. Students also have the opportunity to explore topics in greater depth.

Encourage student participation in extracurricular activities.

Teachers and staff should personally invite students at risk of dropping out to school-related activities. Schools also can provide extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, after-school field trips, guest speakers, postsecondary partnerships, or service groups.

The Five Big Rocks

① Learning Environment

▶ Play Video

00:00

Building a Personalized Culture Using the Five Big Rocks

Foxfire Center for Student Success (OH)

The principal at Foxfire discusses the foundational principles of the school's learning environment: Big Rocks. These principles are Core Values, Wellness, Communication, Building and Building Relationships and Celebrating Success, and Non-Academic Barriers. The sample material, *Big Rocks*, describes the school's core values that form the foundation of the school's learning environment. **(5:27 min)**

⬇ DOWNLOAD VIDEO | QUICKTIME | 31 MB

⬇ TRANSCRIPT & DETAILS | PDF | 141 KB

Interviews

Building a Personalized Culture Using the Five Big Rocks
The principal at Foxfire discusses the foundational principles of the school's learning environment: The Five Big Rocks.

Building a Personalized Environment Through Small Learning Communities
Western Hills University High School uses a team approach and flex block scheduling to foster a personalized learning environment.

Sample Materials

📄 **Big Rocks**

📄 **Avanza Program and Spanish Language General Education Development (GED)**

Foxfire Big Rocks

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Practice 6

Provide Rigorous and Relevant Instruction to Engage Students and Build Skills

Rigorous/Relevant Instruction

Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to engage stude

Students must be prepared for postsecondary education and careers
Schools can implement strategies aimed at improving the rigor of clas
as its relevance to students' lives. This will help ensure that student
to complete high school, succeed in college without remediation, and
Districts and schools may complement rigorous and relevant instructi
learning environment.

Districts can design a portfolio of high schools to offer multiple pathw
a portfolio, all schools would offer college preparatory academic core
career development. A comprehensive portfolio of schools could also
for students who have dropped out or who need flexible approaches

rigorous academic curriculum

▶ Start

Multimedia Overvie

**Engaging Students
Needed to Graduat
Relevant Instructio**

This multimedia over
can bolster student e
rigorous and relevant
pathways to career a
(6:04 min)

⬇ TRANSCRIPT & DETA

Key Concepts

Provide teachers with ongoing ways to expand their knowledge and improve their skills.

Professional development workshops can be facilitated by grade-level team leaders, school-based coaches, or outside professional consultants. Workshops can occur monthly or during the summer and should cover instructional practices related to teaching curricular material content or classroom-based instruction strategies such as cooperative learning.

Integrate academic content with career- and skill-based themes through career academies or multiple pathways models.

Students should have the opportunity to see the relevance of their academic work by applying academic skills to work-world problems. Large comprehensive high schools can create "schools within a school" around career-related themes such as health, business, or the arts.

Host career days and offer opportunities for work-related experiences and visits to postsecondary campuses.

Schools can invite community members who work in different fields to share their experiences in the workplace. Introducing students to these types of experiences encourages students to consider career and postsecondary options early. Schools can also facilitate visits to college campuses that include discussions with admissions or financial aid officials.

Provide students with assistance and information about the demands of college.

Knowledgeable and supportive advisors can assist students by providing information about college admissions processes and about the course requirements for particular fields. Specific types of support might include providing postsecondary counselors to assist with the application process, offering seminars about college admission requirements, and SAT/ACT preparation programs.

Partner with local businesses to provide opportunities for work-related experience such as internships, simulated job interviews, or long-term employment.

Schools can establish agreements with local businesses to provide simulated (or real) job interviews, internships, or long-term employment. These opportunities would provide practical on-the-job experience and exposure to employability skills in a range of occupations.

DOINGWHATWORKS

Site Profiles

Practice Summary   **Learn What Works**   **See How It Works**   **Do What Works**

Foxfire Center for Student Success (OH)

Details

Where:	Zanesville, Ohio
Type:	Suburban
District:	Maysville Local School District
Grade Level:	9-12 Grade
Demographics:	75% White 17% Other 9% Black 47% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch 20% Special Education
	(Ohio Department of Educa...
Contact:	Todd Whiteman, Principal

See How it Works

Further Details

Highlights	**Summary of Approach**	**Achievement Data**	**All Media & Sample Materials**

Summary of Approach

Practices covered:

- Data Systems
- Adult Advocates
- Academic Supports
- Social/Behavior Programs
- Learning Environment
- Rigorous/Relevant Instruction

The Foxfire Center for Student Success, in Zanesville, Ohio, grew out of the Maysville School District's need to provide an alternative setting for those students who disrupted the learning environment at the district's only high school.

Designed as a dropout recovery school, Foxfire serves students 16 to 22 years old who wish to return after dropping out, who have been involved with either the juvenile or adult court systems, or have been referred to the school through a community agency. Foxfire is considered a community school because it has an integrated focus and emphasis on academic, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement. Although the school is located within the Maysville Local School District, students from 11 surrounding school districts can attend Foxfire. The school is governed by the Maysville Local School District's School Board and the Foxfire Board of Directors.

DOWNLOAD FURTHER DETAILS | PDF | 123 KB

Highlights	**Summary of Approach**	**Achiev...**

Highlights

Foxfire Center for Student Success is an alternativ
It serves as a dropout recovery school for studen
districts. The school provides:

- Ongoing monitoring of student interventions and interventions if needed
- Invisible mentoring for all students
- Extensive academic supports for credit recovery
- Wrap-around services with an on-site communit
- Small, personalized classes
- Instruction that is relevant and provides opportu community

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Next Steps – Food for Thought

- What data are important for our school and district to use to identify students who are off-track to graduation? How does your school and district know the needs of your students?

- What supports (academic and social-emotional) are in place? What additional supports are needed to meet students' needs?

- How can our school and district strengthen academic rigor and relevance and develop a more personalized learning environment?

http://dww.ed.gov

Want to use DWW to support your dropout prevention and school reform efforts and need more assistance?

Contact me at:

Marlene Darwin, Ph.D.
American Institutes for Research (AIR)
mdarwin@air.org
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