



THE POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF DROPOUT PREVENTION DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RE-ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

HOW POLICIES AND PRACTICES IMPACT STUDENTS

School practices and policies can unintentionally contribute to pushing students out of school. Reviewing and modifying policies and practices on discipline, attendance, grading, school climate, relationships and behavior can make the difference in student success and retention. Effective school policies and procedures that are flexible and accommodating can lead to both improved outcomes for students and improved graduation rates for schools.

WHY FOCUS ON POLICIES AND PRACTICES?

Research-based tactics for improving graduation rates include policies and practices that ensure all students have the positive school climate and effective academic guidance needed to attain their goals. Concurrent enrollment, multiple pathways to graduation, attendance plans, restorative discipline and dropout recovery and re-engagement are among those that districts can provide to affect change.

Analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and practices related to attendance, behavior, and course grading at the middle school and high school level is the first step in making the difference for students. Paired with consensus building, school leaders and faculties together can identify and implement research-based practices in prevention and intervention specific to their student needs. Some examples include:

- School-wide bullying prevention programs to improve school climate;
- Counseling and support for students found with drugs;
- Provide teachers with options other than failure for students with academic difficulties; and
- Afterschool, weekend, or summer programs to provide additional opportunities that help students enhance their academic skills, increase their engagement, and find their own path toward graduation.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Research indicates that policy and practice reviews should include:

- Increasing a district's capacity to offer credit recovery options at both traditional and continuation high schools;
- Enrolling credit-deficient students in rapid recovery interventions as soon as issues are detected;

Policies and Practices Statewide

Colorado has moved away from strict and mandatory punishment to supportive school discipline with the elimination of "Zero Tolerance" approaches.

- Colorado State policy now supports schools to use alternatives to suspension and expulsion.



- Advocating for academic, behavioral, and social interventions to follow re-enrollees to the schools where they return by targeting special funds to support continuity of these efforts;
- Designating staff to coordinate short-term credit accrual and long-term graduation plans for individual re-enrollees; and
- Addressing funding disincentives by adjusting the formula for the dropout rate.

In terms of implementation, research points to a three-stage pyramid prevention model. Schools and districts may consider this model and how the policies and practices intersect at each level.

1) At the base of the pyramid, district and school-wide reforms aimed at:

- Providing quality instruction that promotes engaged learning and successful high school completion
- Including a whole-school approach to encouraging regular attendance and other positive behaviors

2) At the second level of the pyramid, targeted efforts to smaller groups of

students who need additional support beyond the school-wide reforms to address attendance, behavior and/or academic struggles.

3) At the top of the pyramid, representing 5-10% of the student population, intensive interventions. These interventions often occur at the one-on-one level and involve specialists such as school social workers, mental health professionals and community partners.



Policy and Practices References and Materials:

[Dropout Prevention Best Practice Guide References](#)

[Dropout Prevention Resources](#)

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/bpguide-policies>