

Delaware's Promise Dropout Prevention Committee

Meeting Highlights

May 27, 2009

1:30- 3:30 pm

- The meeting was held in the Cabinet Room of the Townsend Building and chaired by Dr. Coffield. The meeting began with a welcome and introductions. The group was asked to review the meeting highlights from March 23, 2009. No edits were suggested.
- Dr. Coffield then proceeded to review the three areas of focus identified from the America's Promise Action Plan at the March meeting:
 - 1. Inventory & evaluation of current efforts-**
 - a. Who in Delaware is working on dropout prevention and what are they doing?
 - b. Evaluation of outcomes/effectiveness and/or use of best practices methodology
 - i. Regional Education Lab (no cost)
 - ii. United Way
 - iii. Self-Assessment Tools (review those currently available and adapt or adopt one)
 - c. Develop & disseminate technical assistance and professional development resources grounded in research-based best practices to address gaps in current practice and to promote capacity building for teachers, building administrators, community based organizations and others.
 - 2. Develop a dropout risk assessment tool for district and school use by tapping into the Data Warehouse with specific queries.**
 - a. Develop the queries and user interface for the tool.
 - b. Develop and disseminate technical assistance and professional development on the use of the tool.
 - c. Once we are able to identify vulnerable students based upon proven indicators, take preventative action. (See a, iii above: Develop & disseminate technical assistance and professional development resources to address gaps in best practice and capacity building) for teachers, building administrators, community based organizations and others.
 - 3. Communication/Collaboration Across agencies (DOL, Kids Dept., etc) and with community partners and non-profits**
 - a. Discuss with other Cabinet Secretaries to ensure their awareness of the dropout issue and the economic impact. Establish a partnership in the effort to address the crisis.
 - b. Agree upon and send common key messages (call to action, economic impact, stats...)
 - c. Look for efficiencies by reduction in the duplication of efforts

- d. Share relevant data
 - e. Share best practices for replication
- Dr. Coffield then shared the results of the online survey that was conducted in response to item 1a above, **Inventory of Current Efforts**. The purpose of the survey was to identify who in Delaware is providing drop out prevention services/interventions and what it was they are doing.
 - The survey questions were developed by a subset of the committee and distributed electronically. The full committee participated in the distribution of the survey by sending the e-mail to contacts in their distribution lists. The survey was also distributed to all persons who attended the America's Promise Dropout Prevention Summit. Reminder e-mails were also sent a week prior to the close of the survey on Friday, May 22, 2009.
 - The final report distributed at this meeting was printed on May 26, 2009. The committee reviewed the results. Results of the survey indicate:
 - More providers address students at the high school level than the middle school level.
 - Approximately half of those who responded stated that they were **NOT** using a scientifically research-based or outcome-based program.
 - Of those who responded to the survey, most indicated their programs focus on prevention and intervention.
 - Of those who responded to the survey and indicated their program focused on **prevention**- homework assistance, tutoring and social skills were most frequently cited interventions/strategies.
 - Of those who responded to the survey and indicated their program focused on **intervention**- mentoring, behavior management and life-skills training were most frequently cited interventions/strategies.
 - Of those who responded to the survey and indicated their program focused on **credit recovery**- teacher directed interventions were most frequently cited interventions/strategies. Several respondents indicated that their programs were utilizing computer based credit recovery options (ex: Plato, Novel) and Twilight Programs.
 - Nearly 80% of the respondents indicated that their programs did not charge students a fee to participate/were NOT fee based.
 - It was acknowledged that the survey results have limitations and should be cautiously interpreted; however, they could provide some basis for decision making around next steps. A request was made to go back to the disaggregated data/individual records to create a catalog of providers and services. Dr. Coffield will follow-up with the technology staff to try to accomplish this by the next meeting.

- Dr. Coffield then called the group's attention to item 2 above: **Develop a dropout risk assessment tool for district and school use by tapping into the Data Warehouse with specific queries.**
 - A copy of Title 14 Education DE Administrative Code Regulation 505: High School Graduation Requirements and Diplomas was distributed and reviewed with the group. Attention was drawn to Section 4.0 Monitoring Student Progress (Personalize the High School Experience). The code specifically states:
 - 4.0 Monitoring Student Progress (Personalizing the High School Experience)**
 - 4.1 Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, every eighth and ninth grade student shall have a Student Success Plan (SSP) developed by the student, the student's advisor, at least one other school staff member and the student's parent(s), guardian(s) or relative caregiver. Each school year thereafter a grade shall be added so that by the 2011-2012 school year, every student in grades 8 through 12 shall have a Student Success Plan. [For a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) the Student Success Plan (SSP) shall also incorporate the other aspects of the transition plan required by 14 DE Admin. Code 925.]
 - 4.2 Each local school district and charter school shall establish a process for developing Student Success Plans that includes:
 - 4.2.1 Actively monitoring student progress, on an ongoing basis and, at a minimum, by the end of each marking period in those courses required for graduation,
 - 4.2.2 Providing support services if a student is failing or in danger of failing courses required for graduation, and
 - 4.2.3 Annual updating of the Student Success plans by the student, the student's advisor, at least one other staff member and the student's parent(s) guardian(s) or relative caregiver] and others as appropriate.
 - 4.2.4 Following the guidelines for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study outlined in the CTE State Plan.
 - 4.2.5 Reviewing each student's transcript at the end of the first and second year of high school to determine if the student is on track to graduate based on the following criteria:
 - 4.2.5.1 At the end of the first year of high school the student has earned at least three (3) core course credits and two (2) other course credits for a total of five (5) course credits; and
 - 4.2.5.2 At the end of the second year of high school the student has earned at least six (6) core course credits and four (4) other course credits for a total of ten (10) course credits.
 - 4.2.5.3 For a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), on track to graduate shall be consistent with 4.2.5.1 and 4.2.5.2 unless otherwise determined by the student's IEP Team.
 - The point was made that the policy is in place that requires ongoing monitoring of student progress and intervention when students are not making adequate progress. It is not clear that capacity, the resources or the tools to accomplish the task of monitoring students are available in an equitable manner across all school districts. The development of a simple and easy to use Early Identification/Warning System utilizing the exiting data collected in the DOE Data Warehouse would be a beneficial tool that could aid in compliance with Regulation 505.

- Several factors must be considered in the development of the tool. Dr. Coffield called the groups attention to the Alliance for Excellent Education's Policy Brief on *Using Early-Warning Data to Improve Graduation Rates: Closing Cracks in the Education System* (August 2008).
 - "Business Rules" developed jointly by key stakeholders such as the district superintendents, the State Board of Education and the Department of Education, that would address and clearly articulate what the tool is designed to do, why it is needed and what and how the data will be used. FERPA considerations must be part of the conversation.
 - The indicators that will be utilized in the state-wide tool
 - On track to graduate
 - Attendance, Behavior, Course Grades/Credits (ABC's)
 - Provide both reports?
 - What will the "triggers" for at risk be and will it differ by region, district, or school? Can the REL look at historical data and provide us with the triggers and help determine the levels of demarcation? The schools could receive individualized reports based upon their specific triggers and their capacity to provide interventions and services. These reports could be shared in a variety of ways: sent electronically as attachments, via existing systems by clicking on an icon, posted on a password protected website.
 - Does all the necessary data exist in the DOE Data Warehouse, or does some of it reside at the local level? If so, this would require an alignment/articulation of those data into the system. (Ex: If failing 9th grade mathematics were an indicator/predictor: common course naming conventions might be necessary so that the program could match failing grade in "freshman mathematics" across all schools/districts.)
 - The data & reports generated by the system should be presented in an easy to understand format and should be limited to the indicators that have a strong research base.
 - The next step of the puzzle is to develop the catalog or toolkit of research-based strategies/interventions that districts could utilized for various categories of students at risk. Research clearly shows that many students who are intellectually capable are dropping out of high school. Dropping out of school is a process, not an event. Students drop out for a number of reasons and the data can be used to address students' academic challenges by categories (For

example: students who struggle in MS and enter HS off track or students who struggle during 9th grade). Research suggests a tiered approach to interventions very similar to the RtI model and the proposed DECAN Communications Plan.

- The group was cautioned that the system itself would not contribute to higher graduation rates, but rather the quality services and interventions that were provided at the discretion of local districts based upon the availability of the data would be what contribute to higher graduation rates. Dr. Coffield cautioned that the system would only be as good as the data that was put into it at a local level. Discipline data and attendance data, for example, are dependent upon accurately coding and reporting the data in the existing system.
- The data system would also benefit the state by providing a way to evaluate/measure the success of various interventions over time. It could become an additional source of information for school improvement planning and procurement of professional development for staff based upon student needs.
- Dr. Coffield solicited volunteers from the committee to form a subcommittee that would meet with technical experts to determine what steps would be necessary to develop an Early Identification/Warning System. The subcommittee would work to determine what reports/queries could be created with the data system as it currently exists as well as what steps would be necessary to more fully develop the system to obtain the maximum benefit. Subcommittee volunteers are: John McCoy, Dave Hilyard, Jim Purcell, Jennifer Bausmith and Judi Coffield.

Future meeting dates were selected.
Please mark you calendars.

- June 17, 2009: 2:00- 4:00 pm in the Library Conference Room, Townsend Bldg, Dover
- July 22, 2009: 1:30 – 3:30 pm in the Cabinet Room, Townsend Bldg, Dover

- Next Steps:
 1. Follow-up with technology staff re: survey
 - Misc. categories
 - Individual records to create a catalog of providers and their services
 2. Schedule a meeting with the subcommittee for the Early Identification/Warning System.