

Data for Graduation Improvement

David Riegel

- Understand graduation rate
- Understand significant school factors affecting graduation rate
- Compiling data that will explain graduation rate to stakeholders
- Identifying data points that will help create an improvement plan for your school

Today's outcomes

- Using your most recent graduating class, compile a list or spreadsheet of your entire cohort.
 - This cohort should be listed into three broad categories:
 - On-time graduates
 - Non-graduates who were **active** students in your system at the date of graduation
 - Non-graduates who were **inactive** students at the date of graduation

Your cohort

- The **inactive** students who are non-graduates in your cohort may consist of several categories:
 - Students who moved away and did not enroll in a new school
 - Students who stopped attending
 - Students who were incarcerated
 - Students who entered a GED track

To determine what happened with each student, you will have to research by calling family, other schools, or talking to staff who know them.

Inactive student list

- Inactive student list
- - This is a critically important group to study.
 - If possible, meet with your guidance, attendance, social work, and mental health staff-anyone who knows the story of these students--to develop a narrative for each student.
 - You need to understand who they are, why they left, what interventions were tried to keep them in school.

Inactive Student List

- Your narrative should be placed in a spreadsheet and should answer the following questions:
 - What home issues affected the student's inability to complete?
 - Did the student withdraw or stop coming?
 - What is your school's process for contacting these students? Is it effective? Did anyone intervene or did the student not receive a call from the school?
 - Can you reconstruct the student's path? Do you know where they went after leaving your school?

Inactive Student Narratives

- In some cases students may have enrolled in other schools without your staff knowing.
 - In my previous school, we found three students who counted as dropouts for us who had received diplomas from other schools! Two were in out of state schools and one attended a private school a few miles from our school.
- What can we learn from examples like this?

Inactive Student Narratives

- Does your school send transcripts with the departing student?
 - This can allow the receiving school to build a transcript without requesting records. Without a records request, your school CANNOT remove the student from your cohort.
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- Are there other policies/practices at your school that discourage students from enrolling at another school and requesting records?

Inactive Student Narratives

- After you have studied your inactive list, it is time to look at your active students who failed to graduate.
 - Special education students who will not receive a diploma or will defer it until age 21
 - This is an important category. Although you may not be able to reduce these numbers, it is important to explain to stakeholders how this affects your graduation rate.

Active Student Narratives

- What other categories exist in the “active” list?
 - Students who may graduate as a fifth year senior
 - “senioritis” cases ... those who were on track to graduate until the end
 - Those who entered their senior year with significant credit deficiencies
 - Those who failed to pass state mandated testing

Active Student Narratives

- It is worthwhile to create narratives for these students as well. Once you have done so, look for trends:
 - Was economics a factor? Did the students leave school to work? Did work affect their attendance and grades?
 - Were parents involved?
 - Did the student have an advocate at the school?
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 - Were they successful with credit recovery?

Active Student Narratives

- Once your non-graduates list is complete, you can break it down by ethnicity, race, gender, and economically disadvantaged (free/reduced lunch)
- How do these compare to the ratios of students who graduated?

Demographic Data

- There are a number of ways to draw qualitative data from your report. The first is to conduct a transcript study.
 - Using the list of non-graduates, pull the transcripts of these students.
 - Did most enter their senior year on track to graduate, or were they credit deficient?
 - How many transferred to your school with credit deficiencies?
 - Look particularly at the ninth grade year... did they earn their core credits during the ninth grade year?

Next step: Qualitative Data

- Another source of significant qualitative data is interviews.
 - We interviewed a student who had been homeless and lost her parents during her high school career. From this fifth year senior we learned the importance of our social worker and the personal relationships she formed with various staff to her eventual graduation.
 - Interview your “barely-made-its”... what were their challenges, and what helped them to overcome?

Next Step: Qualitative Data

- Some schools interview several students at the end of the year. They use this information to help teachers understand the struggles students experience.
- Who were the staff that helped them the most? What classes were most difficult?
- How did their home situation affect their ability to attend school?
- What kinds of resources do they need?

Next Step: Qualitative Data

- Interview your guidance staff and others who work most closely with graduating seniors.
 - What is holding back non-graduates?
 - What ideas do they have for improving outcomes?
 - How do they explain the data you uncovered from your list of inactive students?
 - What practices by your registrars and guidance staff would reduce inactive students?

Next Step: Qualitative Data

- What observations and conclusions can you draw from the interviews with students and staff?
 - Can you include this data in your report to stakeholders and your plan to improve graduation outcomes?

Next Step: Qualitative Data

- There are school-wide data points that can contribute to graduation rates.
 - Attendance rates
 - Scores on high stakes tests required for graduation
 - Reading inventories, universal screeners such as MAP
 - How do these trends affect non-graduates?
 - Compare attendance, test scores, etc., of non-graduates and graduates

Other Significant Data Points

- How do discipline trends relate to non graduates?
 - In your list of non-graduates, how many were suspended during their senior year? During other points in high school?
 - What kinds of discipline issues are most prevalent with non-graduates?
 - Again, studying these issues will provide insight into the appropriate strategies for intervention

Discipline Data

- Many people in your community do not understand graduation rates. Creating a report does several things:
 - It will point to a plan of action.
 - It will illustrate the challenges in graduating students.
 - It will create support for your leadership.
 - It may illustrate that your staff is doing all they can to support students.
- I have used these reports for parent groups, the Board, Superintendent, teaching staff, and my immediate supervisors.

Creating a Report for Stakeholders

- First step: create a spreadsheet with each non-graduate's name. You can remove the names later if you want to share the spreadsheet. Other columns:
- - Active/inactive
 - Gender/race/special ed
 - Attendance
 - Discipline data (# suspensions, etc)
 - 2 parents/1 parent/first generation college?
 - 9th grade failures?
 - 12th grade failures?
 - Narrative notes in last column

Creating a Report for Stakeholders

- The spreadsheet can contain as many columns for significant data points as you think are appropriate.
- If done correctly, the columns can use sums to provide a data picture of your non-graduates. For example, your column on ninth grade failures could be averaged to provide an average number of ninth grade failures for non-graduates.

Creating a Report for Stakeholders

- I have created these reports in various ways depending on your number of students and your needs. One is to show your list of students using numbers instead of names and removing identifying information from the narrative.
- Another way to prepare this report is to do an “executive summary.”
 - What percentages were active, inactive, special ed?
 - What were the results of your findings?
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 - What are the implications for future practice?

Creating a Report for Stakeholders

- After completing your cohort analysis, you will have a complete picture of your graduation rate. Sharing this has several advantages.
 - This shows that you KNOW your students.
 - It helps your community understand the range of issues affecting your students.
 - It creates support for your vision for improving student outcomes.

Using Your Data

- 1. Compile non-graduate list divided into active and inactive students.
- 2. Identify demographic and academic factors associated with each student on the list.
- 3. Study transcripts of non-graduates.
- 4. Interview students and staff for qualitative data.
- 5. Summarize finding for stakeholders and prepare plan for action based on conclusions.

Summary