**Research Notes on Early Warning and
Off-track Indicators of High School Graduation**

Indicators

- Off-track Indicators include: **Attendance, Belief, Behavior, and Effort, and Course Performance**.
- Sixth graders who failed math or English/reading, or attended school less than 80% of the time, or received an unsatisfactory behavior grade in a core course had only a 10% to 20% chance of graduating on time. Less than 1 of every 4 students with at least one off-track indicator graduated within one extra year of on-time graduation[i].
- More than one semester "F" in core subjects and fewer than five full course credits by the end of freshman year are key indicators that a student is not on track to graduate[ii]. Low attendance during the first 30 days of the ninth grade year is a stronger indicator that a student will drop out than any other eighth grade predictor, including test scores, other academic achievement, and age[iii].

Recommendations

- Monitor absenteeism: Reliable list of the students who failed to attend school with proper channels to notify parents or guardians immediately. Take appropriate action to ensure students attend school and have the support they need to remain in school.
- Schools need to develop district-wide (or even state-wide) early warning systems to help them identify students at risk of failing in school and to develop mechanisms that trigger appropriate support for the students[iv].
- States can help districts and schools establish middle grades performance indicators and track progress in fulfilling the mission. Indicators might include the percentages of eighth-graders meeting the state's high school readiness standards in mathematics and English/reading/language arts, and the percentages of ninth-graders completing college-preparatory courses successfully. States, districts and schools can monitor and report on these indicators as they prepare students to take college-preparatory courses in grade nine[v].
- Early warning and intervention systems provide the necessary means to unify, focus, and target efforts to improve attendance, behavior, and course performance. Their fundamental purpose is to get the right intervention to the right student at the right time. To achieve this, consider the following:
    - Focus on effective intervention, not just identification.
    - Recognize and build on student strengths.
    - Provide time, training, and support to teachers for implementing early warning and intervention
    - Match resources to student needs but practice intervention discipline
    - Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
    - Provide the appropriate ratio of skilled adults to students in need.
    - Teachers and administrators can get started with just the data currently available in their schools[vi].
- **Provide multiple years of support during key periods of transition such as summer[vii],[viii].**

ENDNOTES

[i] Balfanz, Robert. 2009. Putting Middle Grade Students on the Graduation Path. A Policy and Practice Brief. National Middle School Association. http://www.nmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research_from_the_Field/Policy_Brief_Balfanz.pdf (Accessed January 17, 2010).

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[vii] Balfanz, Robert. 2009. Putting Middle Grade Students on the Graduation Path. A Policy and Practice Brief. National Middle School Association. http://www.nmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/research/Research_from_the_Field/Policy_Brief_Balfanz.pdf (Accessed January 17, 2010).

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