

Strategic Planning to Improve the Graduation Rate

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Solutions
to the Dropout Crisis

Dropout Prevention Process

- Gather the data
- Face the facts
- Determine the issues
- Seek solutions
- Create a plan
- Implement the plan
- Evaluate the results



Gather the Data

- Determine the formula you'll use to compute your graduation rate
 - National Governors' Association formula
$$\frac{\text{On-time graduates for Year X}}{\text{1st-time 9th graders (Year X-4) + transfers in - transfers out}}$$
- Disaggregate the data to locate underperforming groups



Face the Facts

- Be brutally honest.
- Determine whether your graduation rate, overall and for each subgroup, is acceptable to your community, district, and school.
- Determine whether you have the personnel, expertise, credibility, and determination to move through the next steps on your own.



Determine the Issues

- Performance Assessment and Review (PAR) Process
 - Contract with National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC)
 - Select focus
 - Host PAR visit
 - Receive PAR report
 - Now what?



Determine the Issues – PAR Visit

“I hope what we learn through this process, institutionally, is that there are things that the system can and must do to meet the needs of the children we serve rather than the children we serve having to fit a system that is so narrowly constructed that it cannot respond to their needs.”

Dr. David Flowers
Superintendent
Fargo Public Schools



Determine the Issues – PAR Visit

- Interviews
 - Students
 - Staff
 - Building and district administration
 - Parents
 - Community agencies
 - Community members
- Data analysis
- Site visits



Determine the Issues

- Fargo's comprehensive recommendations
 - Develop a system for coordinated planning and implementation of alternative education and dropout prevention.



Determine the Issues

- Implement professional development for faculty and school leaders
 - Address resistance to change
 - Emphasize teaching that reaches all learners
 - Promote the appreciation of the validity and value of all purposes of public education
 - Fully integrate alternative learning in regular schools
 - Implement educational technologies to address nontraditional teaching and learning



Determine the Issues

- Develop early identification and intervention programs
- Develop a continuum of learning alternatives
- Expand instructional practices and the teaching/learning process



Determine the Issues

- Employ alternative educational scheduling
- Initiate a freshman academy program as a transition strategy for ninth graders
- Establish a comprehensive, districtwide alternative school
- Exploit underutilized existing educational resources



Determine the Issues

- Establish a superintendent's initiative for community collaboration
 - Develop a shared concept of a broadened sense of purpose for public education
 - Address student substance abuse as a community-based educational problem
 - Tie public secondary education to the world of work
 - Address the attendance and truancy issue as a wide-scale community initiative



Seek Solutions

- Develop Dropout Prevention Steering Committee
 - Principals (Elementary, Middle, High School)
 - Counselors (Elementary, Middle, High School)
 - Classroom teachers
 - ELL
 - Gifted education
 - Special education
 - Alternative education
 - District office
 - Fargo Education Association



Seek Solutions

- Conduct Dropout Prevention focus groups
 - Community issues
 - Parent involvement
 - Teaching/learning
 - Alternative programs

Focus group membership includes students, parents, local government, law enforcement, business, social services, teachers, staff, administrators, and school board members.



Create a Plan

- Mission and goals
- Early identification
 - Criteria
 - At risk of dropping out
 - Underperforming
 - Monitoring
 - Staffing



Create a Plan

- Designation of Dropout Prevention Coordinator
 - In-district
 - Coordination of K-12 intervention programs
 - Implementation/supervision of alternative programs
 - Staff training
 - Community
 - Coordination with agencies, juvenile court, social services, mental health, etc.
 - Leadership with alcohol/substance abuse efforts



Create a Plan

- Involvement of all staff
 - Ownership
 - Use of effective instructional strategies
 - Effective communication with parents
 - Accountability for student learning



Create a Plan

- Alternative programs
 - Support of general school reform
 - In-building programs (Combination teacher-directed and computer assisted (CAI))
 - Middle school alternative program
 - High school alternative program
 - Separate locations
 - Woodrow Wilson extended program (Independent study, engaged learning, vocational, therapeutic)
 - Middle school program



Implement the Plan

- Alternative Programs
 - High School
 - Alternative high school
 - 9th and 10th Grade block programs
 - Evening classes
 - Online classes
 - Individualized Learning Centers
 - 9th Grade alternative



Implement the Plan

- Middle School
 - Educational Day Program
 - Advisory
 - Individualized Learning Centers
 - Middle-level alternative
- Elementary School
 - Positive Behavioral Support
 - Morning Meeting/Advisory
 - Attendance social worker
 - Systematic Screening for Behavioral Disorders



Implement the Plan

- Traditional schools
 - Dropout Prevention Coordinators
 - RTI
 - Pyramids of Interventions
 - School Attendance Review Board



Evaluate Programs and Processes

- District Dropout Prevention Study Committee
 - Alternative education standards
- Dropout Prevention Advisory Board
- Data



Where Do We Go Now?

- Alternative Education standards
- Alternative high school renewal
- Middle-level alternative
- Graduation plan for Native American students
- Online curriculum development
- RTI support
- Behavior management training
- Early/middle college
- Service-learning
- Check & Connect



For More Information

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