NEWSLETTER

Effective Instruction

Strategies for Success

THE THEME OF THIS NEWSLETTER IS WHAT WORKS AND DOESN'T WORK IN INSTRUCTION. HOWEVER, IT WILL NOT BE A PRESENTATION OF NICE LITTLE HINTS OR TRICKS THAT HAVE WORKED FOR ME (OR ANOTHER TEACHER), AND IT IS NOT WARNINGS OF WHAT LITTLE PROCEDURES SHOULD BE AVOIDED. RATHER IT IS A PRESENTATION OF BROAD SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES THAT ARE SUPPORTED BY A GREAT NUMBER OF RESEARCH STUDIES, USUALLY HUNDREDS.

Many of the presentations that follow are based on the work of Dr. Myles I. Friedman who decided some 15 years ago to collect, summarize, and codify research findings for practitioners. He felt that too often there was a disconnect between what was discovered in research and actual classroom practices. His numerous publications in the years that followed attempted to aid teachers and administrators with useful summaries of research findings. Additionally, he included a number of common educational practices that were NOT supported by research findings. An example of the latter is the teaching of reading using the whole language approach.

Dr. Friedman's data-based approach is especially relevant to those who work to reduce the number of dropouts in our schools. First, many of those who drop out must be viewed as failures of the educational system. It is relatively uncommon for dropouts to be academic successes because they tend to fall in the lower segments of the achievement range. So for many of these students, instruction has been relatively ineffective. Any steps to increase the relevance, strength, and success of instruction will have a positive effect on attrition. As students find themselves more successful and as they understand concepts more clearly, they will tend to attend more regularly and see themselves as academically able.

For example, if every school that used whole language instruction were to abandon this unsupported approach, fewer students would reach high school as weak readers. This increased reading strength would translate into better achievement in language arts, social studies, science, and all other academic courses. I can recall high school students who were unable to read at all. At that point, there was no viable alternative to dropping out because remediation was not available and academic success impossible.

Of course, a couple of caveats are in order. Most teachers already use some of the successful strategies in their instruction without consciously adopting them. However, these teachers can most certainly benefit from incorporating more of the strategies more often. Secondly, it is impossible for every teacher to use every strategy.

Thus what follows is a blueprint for educators to use to fashion successful academic programs and be assured that they will be supported by literally hundreds of research projects.

Our field of education has been plagued by many programs that have come and gone. It is rare for a program to be instituted and continued for the number of years necessary to build success. Let's look at the success that Singapore has had in building a world leading math program. This former British colony came out of World War II, decimated by the flow of the war which washed over this obscure part of Southeast Asia twice. The instruction system was relatively unsuccessfu and students noncompetitive. After independence, the leaders began to investigate changing instructional methods to foster math understanding. By the 1980s, they had developed an approach using modeling techniques and pilot-tested it. Then they began the introduction of the method, the retraining of the teachers, and the development of materials. Their position on international math testing has since moved from near the bottom to the very top and in the process far surpassed the United States. We do not pursue success in this dedicated way to our great detriment.

Effective Instruction could form a basis for reform and program development that would create long-term achievement gains and improved performance by our students relative to other students worldwide. We hope this newsletter will create some new thinking in this important area.

—Dr. Charles W. Hatch, Guest Editor
Chairman of the Board of EDIE
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2009 NDPN Crystal Star Winners

Congratulations to the 2009 National Dropout Prevention Network Crystal Star Awards of Excellence Winners! More detailed information is found on our Web site, www.dropoutprevention.org.

Individual Winners

Kathy Edwards Bell, Spartanburg High School, Spartanburg, SC

Kathy Edwards Bell, Spartanburg High School, Spartanburg, SC, developed Alternatives In Motions (AIM) for Success, a research-based program for at-risk students. AIM is now recognized by the South Carolina Department of Education as a model program. Kathy is director of the AIM Program at Viking Academy, a smaller learning community within Spartanburg High School, serving 150 students with a variety of strategies.

Wayne Rodolfich, Superintendent of Pascagoula School District, Pascagoula, MS

Wayne Rodolfich, superintendent of the Pascagoula School District, Pascagoula, MS, led the district through the recovery period after Hurricane Katrina. He created the STAR bus, a Students' Technology and Reading Bus, and also created the Pascagoula School District's "Destination Graduation" dropout prevention program.

Program Winners

Grossmont Union High School District's Dropout Prevention Program

Grossmont Union High School District's Dropout Prevention Program, El Cajon, CA. Superintendent Robert Collins accepted the award for the program. Grossmont Union High School District's Dropout Prevention Program began in the spring of 2004 with a multipronged approach to addressing the district's dropout problem.

Butler Tech's Options Academy

Butler Tech's Options Academy, Wokini, West Chester, OH. Supervisor Laura Sage accepted the award for Options Academy – Wokini, an alternative school that serves students in Lakota School District.

SUCCESS Program

SUCCESS Program, Des Moines, IA. Margaret Connet, Program Manager, accepted the award for the SUCCESS Program which is a year-round, school-based youth and family services program that serves children and families—prenatal through age 21.

Barbara Goleman Senior High Residential Electrical Wiring Program

Barbara Goleman Senior High, M-DCPS Residential Electrical Wiring Program, Miami Lakes, FL, won the Students With Disabilities Program Award. Director Dr. Alex Azan accepted the award for the program which began in 2002 and serves students with emotional/behavioral disabilities (EBD).

Network Notes

The 2009 Leadership Award

■ Dr. Patrick J. O'Connor was the recipient of the 2009 National Dropout Prevention Network Distinguished Leadership and Service Award. This award is given each year to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the NDPN. Dr. O'Connor is on the graduate faculty in the College of Education, Health and Human Services at Kent State University. Over the years, his contributions to the Network include participation as a presenter at national conferences; guest editor of this newsletter; author or co-author of NDPN publications; guest on *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis*; and a leader in his state in promoting the work of the National Dropout Prevention Network. The Network congratulates Pat and thanks him for his many activities in support of the Network.

A Collaborative Effort

■ This newsletter has been a collaborative effort between the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network and the Institute for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Education (EDIE). EDIE is a nonprofit charitable organization established to encourage and enable educators to base more of their decisions on scientific evidence. This particular newsletter focuses on evidence-based instructional strategies. The Web site for EDIE is www.edieinstitute.net.

Meet Our Guest Editor

■ Dr. Charles W. Hatch is chairman of the Board of EDIE. Dr. Hatch graduated from the University of South Carolina and Johns Hopkins University. He started teaching 9th grade in Baltimore, MD, and subsequently taught in North

Dakota and Montana. He moved back to South Carolina where he taught 9th-12th grade English. He has also taught a number of graduate and undergraduate courses for several colleges and universities which were generally in the fields of educational research, statistics, and computers.For the last 30 years, he has led successful test preparation workshops, which have usually focused on the PRAXIS tests, formerly known as the NTE (National Teachers Exam). He was a co-author for the *Educators Handbook on Effective Testing* (EDIE). In 2007, *Pass That Test* was also published by EDIE which summarized his experience in test preparation. *Pass That Math Test* will appear later in 2010.

Solutions Begins Third Year!

Elaine Craft with hosts Sam Drew and Marty Duckenfield

■ *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* began its third year of bringing you free professional development programs over the Internet with a program on Advanced Technogical Education presented by our guest, Elaine Craft. At the FORUM, *Solutions* will be presenting its radio webcast in front of a live studio audience in addition to our many loyal participants from across the country. Dr. Stephanie Hirsh, Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council, will be our guest. This program, like all others, will be archived on our Web site, www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast, to provide you with continuous opportunities for high quality, free professional development. And stay tuned to the March 16th program which will focus on the Effective Strategy of early childhood education, with Sarah Walzer, Executive Director of the Parent-Child Home Program, as our guest.

John Murray Retires From NDPN Board

■ John Murray, former Chair of the NDPN and the 2008 winner of the National Dropout Prevention Network Distinguished Leadership and Service Award, has recently retired from the NDPN Board of Directors after serving 10 years. His services to the Network have been significant during that time, and so we extend our great appreciation and good wishes to John!

Introducing the Partners in Learning Network

■ The NDPC has joined forces with Microsoft's Partners in Learning Network, a Web site dedicated to connecting like-minded education professionals from around the corner or around the world to collaborate on key successes and challenges in schools today.

Beginning March 1, a moderated community discussion about dropout prevention will be hosted on www.PartnersInLearningNetwork.com. Registration for the site is free, and users will have unlimited access to its comprehensive and diverse resources. After registering, simply click on the "Community" tab, search for "NDPC–Dropout Prevention Community," click on that community, and then click "Join Now" to view and participate in the discussion.

NDPC and the US Partners in Learning team will host two webcasts led by top education experts on dropout prevention. The first webcast will be held March 17th at 6:30 p.m. EST—*A Nation Still at Risk: The Grim Realities of School Dropouts,* presented by Dr. Steve Edwards. This will be followed in April with a Panel Discussion about what works in dropout prevention.

Partners in Learning network
www.partnersinlearningnetwork.com

Strategies for More Effective Instruction

by Micki Gibson

Dr. Myles Friedman has provided over 500 supportive studies that demonstrate effective strategies for tutoring students who are failing to master important concepts. Another proven strategy is involving time management to increase efficiency.

As an integral part of my weekly instruction plan, I used several of Dr. Friedman's proven strategies. One-to-one tutoring, preventive tutoring, and cooperative grouping increased academic achievement among students who needed extra support and differentiated all students by learning readiness. Intentional teachers know that their students need one-on-one evaluations throughout the school year, which make no assumption of their background knowledge. Some students need to be challenged, and other students need preventive tutoring. It becomes evident by the first nine-weeks of the school year how each student performs; however, there is more involved than their instructional readiness. It also includes understanding the stage of human and cognitive development of the students and how they learn best, thus welcoming instruction.
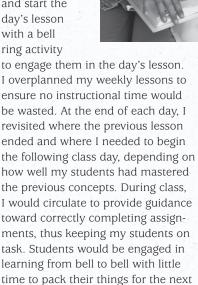
Middle school students are unique and need to feel competent in their learning. Preventive tutoring can be essential during these years for those at risk and offers positive support for learning at a crucial turning point in their school lives.

I offered preventive tutoring alongside enrichment instruction depending on the classroom environment. Some classes I was able to break up into cooperative groups; in other classes, group settings did not work. In the classes where grouping was successful, I used several methods to differentiate instruction. I offered a tiered instruction of the same content to each group so that students could master the information at their own level. During practice, preventive tutoring took place for all groups when I constantly circulated from one group to another making sure that all students were correctly engaged. Essentially, I delivered one-on-one instruction to every student making no assumptions that any of the students had an understanding of the concept being taught. In the classes where cooperative grouping was not successful, I assigned after-school tutoring two days a week. One of the days was designated for students who needed preventive tutoring and the other day was for students who needed enrichment. I sent a letter to parents explaining my purpose for their children. It worked beautifully; I had at least 10 students who reviewed concepts using triangular discussion (student-to-student and student-to-teacher) to enhance or to undo incorrect procedural thinking which is the heart of preventive tutoring. These students also became confident learners, which prepared them for the next level of instruction. Preventive tutoring and enrichment instruction communicate high expectations of students and foster an environment that promotes caring and respect for both students and their parents.

Dr. Friedman also provides evidence-based research involving time management to increase efficiency in classrooms to promote learning and motivate students to stay in school. One of the characteristics of an intentional teacher is taking responsibility for delivering clear lessons that lead students toward mastering concepts combined with maximizing and providing ample teaching time while keeping students on task.

Teachers' many considerations in preparing for a week's lessons include thinking about how to maximize teaching time by reducing managerial routines and interruptions. With that in mind, I began the school year by hammering down on procedural routines so that I would have ample teaching time.

One of the routines that we practiced was lining up outside of the classroom before class began to remind students of classroom rules and routines. After the students entered the classroom, I would warmly greet them and start the day's lesson with a bell ring activity to engage them in the day's lesson. I overplanned my weekly lessons to ensure no instructional time would be wasted. At the end of each day, I revisited where the previous lesson ended and where I needed to begin the following class day, depending on how well my students had mastered the previous concepts. During class, I would circulate to provide guidance toward correctly completing assignments, thus keeping my students on task. Students would be engaged in learning from bell to bell with little time to pack their things for the next class. In fact, they would sigh when they knew the class had ended.

When time management is properly in place with engaging lessons, students will want to learn and dropping out of school will not be an option in their minds. This is the heart of teaching!

—Micki Gibson
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Program Profile

Some Thoughts on Teaching Strategies
by Robert P. Green, Jr.

With what strategies should new teachers be sent into the field? Here I propose some broad categories of strategies from which I would hope new teachers have mastered one or more examples. These categories are not mutually exclusive.

Meaningful Learning

I hope that teachers enter the classroom with an understanding that their job is to provide students with meaningful learning experiences. "Meaningful" learning takes place when new information presented to students relates to or connects with information that children and/or youth already hold in memory. Students learn based on what they already know. What are the implications? Academic information is abstract and formal. Teachers need to find elements in the academic that mean something in the concrete and informal lives of students. In one context, this means an awareness that one doesn't introduce fractions as abstract symbols such as "1/4," but through concrete activities in the world of children such as evenly sharing (and dividing) fruit or other items. In another context, one might introduce a concept such as regionalism or sectionalism to older students, not through an abstract definition but by relating the concept to students' own parochial experiences (e.g., allegiance to "our team" or "our school"). What specific strategies are implied? The first example reflects the fundamental idea behind manipulatives in mathematics. The second example suggests the use of advance organizers, the specific effort to find an introductory concept or generalization that provides mental connections to both the experiences of students and the academic information to follow.

Active Learning

Perhaps the most fundamental mental activity among humans is the search for patterns. We look at the natural world, we observe details, we find patterns in those details, and we express those patterns in generalizations. We apply those generalizations, testing them and modifying them. We are processing information. Teachers should exploit this natural phenomenon. Whether we call them inquiry, discovery, problem solving, constructionist, higher order, or critical thinking strategies, teachers should use strategies that provide students opportunities to learn through processing information. This may mean strategies such as the use of manipulatives in mathematics (as above), experiments in science classes, or the use of primary sources in history classes. The basic structures of academic subjects, as many have pointed out, are composed of both the theories, generalizations, and concepts that provide the ideational structures of the various disciplines as well as the methods for acquiring new information, constructing new understandings, and testing existing knowledge. The granddaddy of the latter is "scientific method." All disciplines, however, have systematic methods of inquiry. It is important that students practice systematic thinking.

Social Learning

By this I mean that teachers should be familiar with strategies that allow students to interact with each other. Students mature intellectually as a result of interaction with both the physical and social environment. Much of what we accomplish as a society is achieved through deliberation and cooperative effort. Strategies that foster student interaction may range from discussion and debate through group work and/or cooperative learning to games and simulations. Teachers should be familiar with some of these strategies.

Management and Learning

There is an old saying suggesting that students who are actively engaged in learning won't be engaged in mischievous activities. While there is certainly truth in that statement, teacher awareness of management strategies is certainly helpful. Strategies supporting "on-task" behavior may derive from managerial concepts such as "withitness" (being aware of all that is going on in your classroom) and range from basic questioning strategies engaging all students (with questions adjusted according to teacher knowledge of individual student strengths and weaknesses) to various behavioral plans that create specific rules as well as hierarchies of positive and negative contingencies. Some management models are based on classroom contracts in the development of which students have participated. Knowledge of models of management is useful to all teachers.

New teachers, then, should have some grasp of strategies that provide meaningful learning, active learning, opportunities for student interaction with peers, and an environment conducive to learning. Strategies in these areas should start them toward a successful career in the classroom!

—Robert P. Green, Jr., Ed.D.
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Book Review

Effective Instruction, A Handbook of Evidence-Based Strategies, 2006. Myles I. Friedman, Diane H. Harwell, and Katherine C. Schnepel. The Institute for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Education. [ISBN 0-9666588-4-1]

And companion volume: *Developing Teaching Effectiveness*, 2007. Myles I. Friedman, Diane H. Harwell, and Katherine C. Schnepel.

This pair of books can be used in many ways to answer the question of how may we best utilize the instructional time that we have with our students. Teachers, teacher preparation programs, and staff development programs in schools and districts could use these books as planning tools and references. The organization of both books is similar, and effective teaching strategies that are proven are described in detail. For those educators who want "all the facts," there is a compilation of statistical findings and a detailed listing of studies that are well annotated and detailed enough so that relevant studies could be easily found and analyzed.

Each chapter of *Effective Instruction* is devoted to one of the twenty-one effective instructional strategies. The chapter then provides a clear overview of that strategy. It pinpoints what type of student might best benefit from this teaching strategy, instructional tactics that can be utilized, and a description of selected studies that have shown this strategy to be effective. The companion volume, *Developing Teaching Effectiveness*, does not include the details and depth of supporting studies but instead gives clear information about how an instructional strategy can be used in the four main content areas.

Instructional strategies that have not been proven effective such as ability grouping and whole language instruction are discussed in the same organized manner as the proven effective learning strategies. This portion of the book is important because several of these strategies are widely used and should be given thoughtful reconsideration as to their true value.

As educators struggle with the question of how best to teach students, these books help pinpoint the answers by clearly outlining strategies that are proven to be successful. As books to be read thoroughly and contemplated, both of these are excellent. As books to use as references, these books fill a great need as teachers plan instruction to guide effective and efficient learning in their classrooms. These books help answer the question of how educators can reach their goals of providing the highest quality instruction.

—Faith W. Mann, Intervention Specialist
Gwinnett County Schools, Mercer University

Resources

Institute for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Education (EDIE)
The sole mission is to encourage and enable educators to base more of their decisions on scientific evidence. EDIE amasses, integrates, and interprets the evidence and publishes it in easy-to-understand language for the benefit of educators and others involved in education.
www.edieinstitute.net

National Staff Development Council
Staff development standards provide direction for designing a professional development experience that ensures educators acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to learn new instructional strategies. Excellent resources of all kinds.
www.nsdc.org

Publications to Support Effective Instruction From NDPC

The National Dropout Prevention Center advocates several teaching strategies as effective in dropout prevention. Publications from the NDPC are a resource towards improvement in teaching effectiveness and student learning. We recommend the following:

★ *Pocket Guide to Multiple Intelligences*

★ *Pocket Guide to Service-Learning*

★ *Pondering Learning: Connecting Multiple Intelligences and Service-Learning*

★ *Powerful Allies: Afterschool Programs, Service-Learning, and Community Education*

★ *Take a Class Outdoors: A Guidbook for Environmental Service-Learning*

These publications can be found on our Web site located at www.dropoutprevention.org.

Events

March 24-27, 2010   San Jose, CA
21st Annual National Service-Learning Conference—*Inspire. Imagine. Innovate!*
www.nylc.org

April 7-9, 2010   Philadelphia, PA
Coalition for Community Schools 2010 National Forum—*Building Innovative Partnerships for Student Success: The Key to America's Future*
www.communityschools.org

April 18-21, 2010   Phoenix, AZ
2nd Annual National Forum on Dropout Prevention Strategies for Native and Tribal Communities—*Reconnecting Native Youth to Education*
www.dropoutprevention.org

Taking Action on Effective Instruction

The Institute for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Education (EDIE) puts the spotlight on what actual instructional strategies are effective. This newsletter, as well as their own publications, have detailed many of these.

And so, what next? It is not enough to know that preventive tutoring is effective, or that time management is a good idea to support good instruction. Teachers need to know how to do it. And they need to be in a school where the climate is supportive for them to try new approaches and be successful in those attempts.

The National Dropout Prevention Center knows that providing high quality professional development, for any new endeavor undertaken in a school, is the key to success. And again, turning to the experts, high quality professional development is something that also has a right way and a wrong way.

We are all familiar with the "wrong way" to do professional development. Teacher in-service experiences are replete with such stories. We can all relate them from our own lives. Yes, those teacher workdays often need to have workshops. And yes, they may even be on a topic that staff are interested in.

But, do they bring about change? Do teachers adapt new strategies because of a half-day workshop? And if they don't, why not?

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has a mission to change the way professional development is implemented. The new definition and the standards from the NSDC provide us with a framework, and we suggest your discovering all their recommendations.

One component that we would like to stress today is how to provide the context for improving teachers' use of effective instructional practices. The NSDC offers the ideal of Learning Communities. The description for such an environment, as written by NSDC for their Web site (www.nsdc.org), follows:

The most powerful forms of staff development occur in ongoing teams that meet on a regular basis, preferably several times a week, for the purposes of learning, joint lesson planning, and problem solving. These teams, often called learning communities or communities of practice, operate with a commitment to the norms of continuous improvement and experimentation and engage their members in improving their daily work to advance the achievement of school district and school goals for student learning.

Learning teams may be of various sizes and serve different purposes. For instance, the faculty as a whole may meet once or twice a month to reflect on its work, engage in appropriate learning, and assess its progress. In addition, some members of the faculty may serve on school improvement teams or committees that focus on the goals and methods of schoolwide improvement. While these teams make important contributions to school culture, learning environment, and other priority issues, they do not substitute for the day-to-day professional conversations focused on instructional issues that are the hallmark of effective learning communities.

Learning teams meet almost every day and concern themselves with practical ways to improve teaching and learning. Members of learning communities take collective responsibility for the learning of all students represented by team members. Teacher members of learning teams, which consist of four to eight members, assist one another in examining the standards students are required to master, planning more effective lessons, critiquing student work, and solving the common problems of teaching.

The teams determine areas in which additional learning would be helpful and read articles, attend workshops or courses, or invite consultants to assist them in acquiring necessary knowledge or skills. In addition to the regular meetings, participants observe one another in the classroom and conduct other job-related responsibilities. Learning communities are strengthened when other support staff, administrators, and even school board members choose to participate, and when communication is facilitated between teams. Because of this common focus and clear direction, problems of fragmentation and incoherence that typically thwart school improvement efforts are eliminated.

Change is never easy; however, adapting new instructional practices can be successfully fostered by teachers working with their peers in Learning Communities.

For further information on professional development, go to www.nsdc.org or listen to the February 16, 2010, *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* webcast with NSDC Executive Director Stephanie Hirsh.

Viewpoint

Calvin came into my 10th grade English class in the lower part of South Carolina some years ago. He was pleasant, polite, and a reasonably good athlete. In fact, the football coach said he really needed him in the fall as a running back. Calvin had trouble in my class because of reading. The ONLY words he was sure of had one letter, "a" and "I." All the others were simply a blur. All those if's, it's, at's, etc. were merely guesses.

Why? He hadn't caught on to reading at the beginning and had never been remediated but just passed on as a "slow student" with C's and D's.

The system had failed Calvin utterly. There was no good alternative for him except to drop out. There was no diploma in his future. However, had his schools used just one of the simple strategies like preventive tutoring when needed, Calvin would have learned to read in early elementary school and had a strong possibility for success.

How many Calvins are there out there? Millions!

Much more recently, George came to me for help with the SAT. He had colleges waiting to give him full athletic scholarships if he could get his scores out of the cellar (500!). We started on math. Even though he was enrolled in algebra and trig, I found he had trouble with fractions. Real trouble. I asked him to represent 3/8. He just drew a straight line about 4 inches long. He will graduate from high school and go to college somewhere but his school has failed him. No systematic remediation had taken place that would have helped him master basic math concepts.

Myles Friedman's book, *Effective Instruction*, offers 21 effective, data-driven methods to increase instructional effectiveness. The research backing the methods is truly impressive because most are supported by literally hundreds of individual studies. In addition, and almost as helpful, is his short list of instructional practices that are NOT backed by data. Some of

these are found in common practice. If schools were to incorporate more of the supported practices and discontinue others that are not supported, the net effect would be to increase the effectiveness of instruction across the board and, of course, increase student test scores and decrease the number of dropouts.

The status of these two young men can be multiplied by hundreds and thousands. However, there is no real need for these deficits to continue; if their instruction had been based on the data-driven concepts of *Effective Instruction*, those numbers would be greatly reduced.

—Charles W. Hatch, Ph.D.
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The purpose of Viewpoint is to allow professionals to express their opinions about issues related to dropout prevention. The opinions expressed by these authors do not necessarily reflect those of the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network.