PROJECT GRADUATE
Preventing Middle & High School Dropouts through Data Collection, Oversight & Intervention

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Student dropout rates remain high in the United States, particularly among low-income, Latino, English Learners, and underrepresented students. While district and school level responses to dropouts vary, NCLB provides an accountability framework that has created increased pressure to create effective data systems that monitor incidences of dropout, and act upon these data. As a result, some districts have responded by creating a strategic infrastructure that adheres to state and federal standards, and optimizes the use of student level data at the district and school level to intervene and address the needs of students at risk of dropping out. This report presents the results of a case study of Esperanza School District, which is considered to be a model for data oversight and use in Washington State. This final report presents the findings from 37 individual interviews with key district staff members, high school and middle school principals, school staff members, and school success coordinators. The findings illuminate several key findings, including: the role of district and school leadership in meeting on-time graduation goals, the benefits of having effective data systems that are both reviewed by district and school leaders weekly, and used to create action plans and tangible efforts at the school level to address students with warning indicators, the challenges that exist in adhering to changing state and federal standards for calculating dropouts, and the challenges that remain for school leaders in sending clear messages and expectations for staff as they attempt to use data to effectively inform their intervention practices. This study further conveys the potential for utilizing state longitudinal data systems to develop an early warning system that is truly student centered and ultimately results in high school readiness and higher graduation rates.

Introduction

Dropout rates remain a challenge for administrators and educators, as districts and schools have failed to develop effective systems and mechanisms to keep youth in school (Orfield, 2004; Rumberger, 2011). This dropout crisis in the United States is even more alarming for underrepresented Latino, African American and Native American communities. For Latino students in particular, dropout rates start as early as middle school and are a result of a combination of factors, including: low academic achievement, absenteeism, failure to serve EL students, tracking, peer selection, and overall low engagement levels in school (e.g. involvement in a sport, extracurricular activity) (Contreras, 2011; Rumberger & Rodriguez, 2002; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Rumberger 2011). The status dropout rates over the past 40 years, while they have generally declined for all groups, remains highest for Latino students (See Figure 1). Because Latino students represent the fast growing segment of the Latino K-12 population, and in some states like California and Texas the largest ethnic group, higher dropout rates have broader implications for the well being of many states witnessing dramatic Latino student demographic growth. The challenge therefore remains very real for districts and schools to develop effective early warning systems to prevent incidences of dropout, as well as viable approaches and mechanisms for students who have left to "drop back into" school.

Figure 1: Status Dropout Rates by Ethnicity, 1995-2009
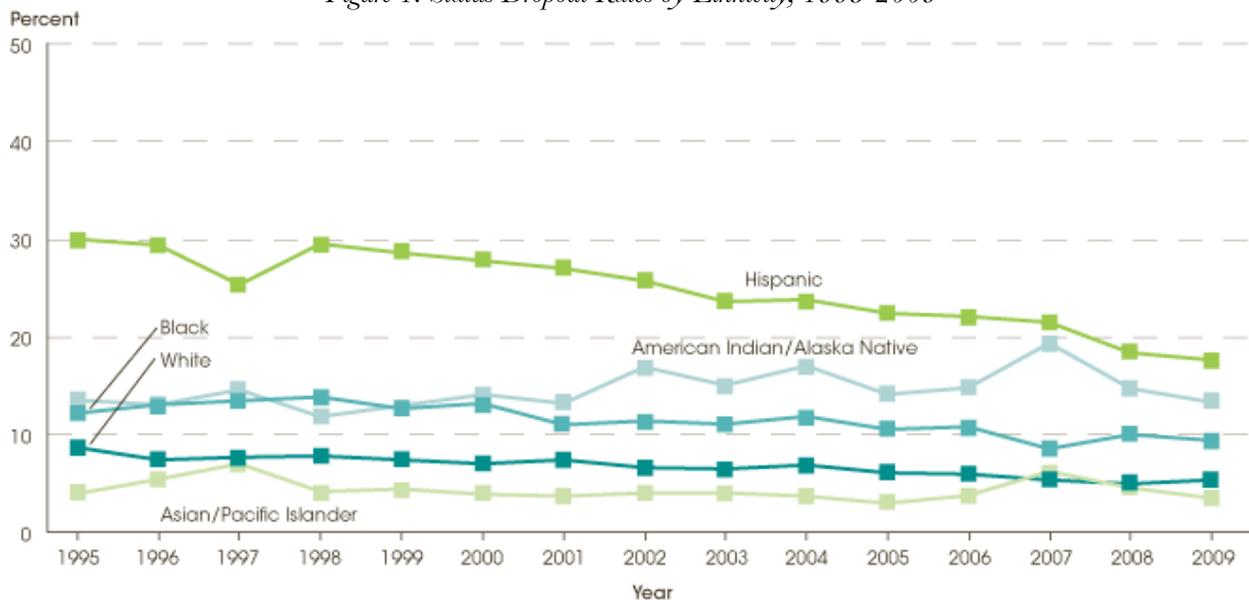
Source: Figure 20-1: Status dropout rates of 16- through 24-year-olds in the civilian, non-institutionalized population, by race/ethnicity: October Current Population Survey (CPS) 1995-2009.

Latino students in Washington State, mirror national patterns, and are increasingly at risk of dropping out of high school and middle school. For the Class of 2006 for example, 49 percent of Latino students graduated high school (Swanson, 2009, EPE Research Center). However, according to Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), this data is higher—66 percent of Latinos graduated from high school that same year. The variability in reported and calculated graduation rates is the very dilemma this research effort intends to inform. Having access to accurate data is critical to improving overall graduation rates among Latino students in

Washington and serves as an important test case for other states that are witnessing emerging Latino student populations.

Understanding data collection process within school districts in Washington State is critical for the efficiency and accuracy of the new state longitudinal CEDARS data system. This research study will contribute to the discussion on data coding, administration, and practices occurring within schools, districts and the state as the new CEDARS system is further developed and used at the state and local level.

Data collection, monitoring and use is a critical issue that requires further examination if we are to raise Latino and underrepresented student graduation rates and intervene for those students that show early warning signs of school departure. Districts, schools and the state need a better assessment of how many students are dropouts or transfers by race, ethnicity, gender and EL status in order to address how to better engage this group of students and keep them enrolled in school through graduation.

Relevant Literature

Latino youth in the U.S. are more likely to drop out of school than any other youth (Fry, 2003; Rumberger & Rodriguez, 2002; Contreras, 2011). Most of the research has focused on identifying early high school indicators for "at risk" students, such as attendance, grade point average, and number of failed courses (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2010; Heppen, O'Cummings, & Therriault, 2008; Jerald, 2006; Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007). However, it is important to note that Latino dropouts present unique characteristics that differ from any other youth. Latino dropouts often experience a range of characteristics, including: language barriers, work long hours, (Fry and Lowell, 2002), are children of immigrants (Gandara & Contreras, 2009), experience higher poverty rates, are more likely to have parents with less than a high school education (Contreras & Gandara, 2009; Contreras, 2011), and is a highly male population (Fry, 2003). It is important that these differences be taken into consideration when determining best practices in decreasing the dropout rate for Latino and underrepresented students.

Research indicates that the transition year from middle to high school is the critical year in high school completion (Heppen et al., 2008). The Early Warning System (EWS) tool, developed by the National High School Center, uses early high school indicators to identify students at risk for dropout or on-time graduation (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2010). In 2009, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported 18% of Latinos dropped out of high school. Latino students increasingly hold the highest dropout percentage compared to their peers (Aud, et. al., 2011). Thus it is important to develop tools and systems that identify "at risk" Latino's prior to the crucial transitional year. And in rural communities it is important that these warning systems begin even earlier—at least by sixth grade.

Efficient and accurate longitudinal student data systems are one systemic approach that may decrease the dropout rates and increase graduation rates among Latino students. Longitudinal data systems can be used to develop screening processes that help these students at an early stage (Hoffman, 2005). Florida's Education Data Warehouse (EDW) system has been collecting student data for over twenty-five years and has developed an efficient and accurate student-level data collecting systems (Kugle & Smith, 2006). Florida student level data includes demographics, enrollment, curriculum, test scores, employment, and financial information. Their efficient and comprehensive data system has allowed them to effectively utilize their state data to analyze trends (Belfanz, et. al., 2011) and create programs that identify "at risk" students and seeks to intervene at an earlier stage.

In Chicago, the Consortium on Chicago School Research introduced an "on track indicator" for students, which assesses student academic achievement during the 9th grade and is used to identify students for intervention services (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). Students who were "on track" academically, were found to be more than 3 times more likely that their peers to graduate on time (within a 4-year time span) than their peers struggling academically (Allensworth & Easton, 2007). Allensworth and Easton (2007) further found that high levels of absenteeism, especially time missed during the first semester of the freshmen year, also predicted higher dropout rates.

Together, much of the research to date has focused on framing the dropout crisis (Orfield, 2004; Rumberger, 2011) as well as the viability of using existing data to predict incidences of dropping out among students (Belfanz, et. al. 2011). However, there are no studies that examine the actual quality of the data, and the processes that go into collecting the student data that are used in such analyses. This study extends the body of literature on dropouts by exploring the role that staff and leadership at the district and school levels play in reducing dropouts and raising on-time graduation rates particularly among underrepresented and low income-students.

Conceptual Framework

This research utilizes central constructs from education and sociological bodies of literature, and expands the literature on dropouts. Specifically, this study explores the impact of data collection, use and oversight to reduce dropout rates in a large urban ring district. Our analysis will be used to inform the data collected for the statewide data system, to assist the state to utilize the longitudinal data system to determine factors and to identify variables that signal to school and district staff a student is at risk of dropping out at the middle or high school levels. This study therefore explores data collection processes within schools in order to better track and understand dropouts and create an efficient early warning system for students.

Previous research has documented the profiles and reasons for Latino students dropping out of high school, which includes, school, peer and institutional factors (Orfield, 2004; Rumberger & Rodriguez, 2002; Rumberger, 1993; Rumberger, 2011). Student behaviors and experiences, such as absenteeism, behavioral issues and low academic achievement also influence dropout rates (Rumberger 2011; Neild & Belfanz, 2006)

There are no existing research studies that document the district and school level processes for preventing student dropout. This study examines the leadership, oversight and actual processes used by an urban ring school district and schools to address and prevent incidences of dropout. This study further explores the infrastructure that exists within a district to collect dropout data, and the leadership structure to ensure on-time graduation and student engagement.

This research also extends the body of literature on dropouts by examining the variables that flag students for intervention as early as middle school (sixth grade) to prevent them from dropping out, and a set of comprehensive variables that serve as an "early warning equation" for schools to routinely assess to intervene prior to student departure.

This research explores the efficiency and accuracy of staff approaches to the relatively new longitudinal Washington CEDARS data system, in order to understand the data collection and assessment practices within four high schools and five middle schools in an urban ring school district in Washington State. Specifically, this paper analyzes the data coding, implementation

and usage among staff members; particularly as these data apply to drop outs, school leavers, and transfers.

The overarching research questions for this research project include:

1) What data collection strategies are employed in an urban ring district to report and assess student transfers or dropouts?
   1a. How are these terms operationalized across the high school staff within the district?
2) How are coding and collection practices assessed for accuracy across select schools within one district? And if so, how might professional development and ongoing training lead to better data collection, coding, understanding and usage within this district?
   2a. Are the variables collected for the state CEDARS appropriate and accurate?
3) How might the CEDARS longitudinal data set be used to create an early dropout warning system?
   3.a. Based on an analysis of the district level data, which variables serve as possible predictors of school disengagement at the middle and high school levels?

This paper focuses on the first two research questions of the larger study, and the results of the quantitative analysis are included in the larger report that documents findings from both methods employed for the Project GRADUATE study.
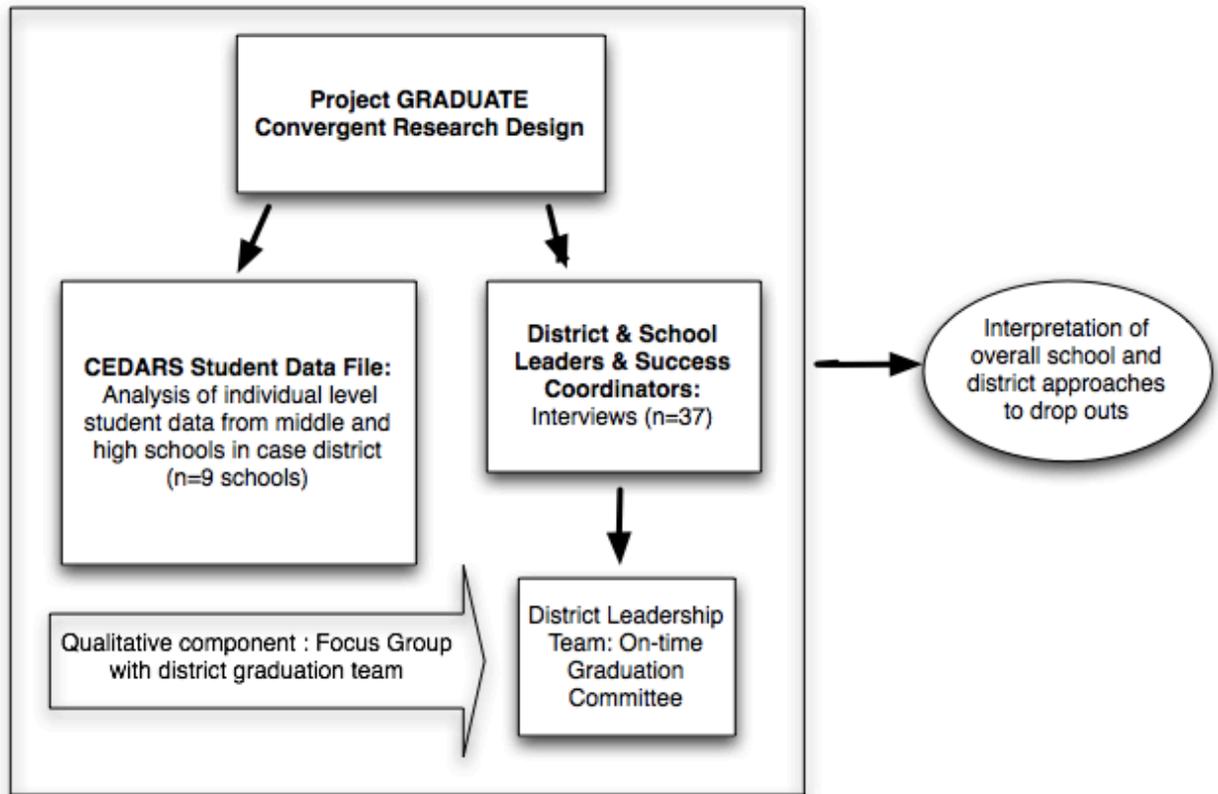
The Study

The case study design employs a mixed-method approach to assess the data collection and analysis processes that exist within one school district in an urban ring setting in Western Washington. A mixed-method approach allows for simultaneous data collection and analysis as well as complementary approaches to understanding a phenomenon and exploring hypotheses (Creswell & Clark, 2011). A mixed-method approach, using a convergent design, allows us to analyze the state's CEDARS longitudinal data file for our select district and interview the individuals that are on the ground collecting, interpreting and acting upon the data and variables that may serve as an "early warning" for dropping out. Descriptive data were produced and assessed to understand the variables collected by the district for the state data system that may serve as good "predictor variables" for dropping out.

The qualitative aspect of this study stems from the individual interviews (n=37) among district and school staff on their data collection practices, oversight and data usage to understand student dropouts. Thirty interviews were taped and transcribed; while seven staff members, two district and five school staff refused to be recorded but agreed to participate in the interview. Detailed notes were taken in these cases by two interviewers. Study participants are in professional positions where they are working with, collecting and analyzing institutional data from the middle and high schools within the district. Nine district level staff members were interviewed, Seven success coordinators, nine high school and middle school principals and twelve school level staff that deal with data intake, collection and oversight participated in this study (see Figure 2).

The quantitative component of the study, entails a detailed analysis of district and school level data, and how such data are collected annually. These data will be analyzed with the statistical package SPSS 19 to determine the variables within CEDARS that produce an "Early Warning Equation" for underrepresented students, the group with the highest national dropout rates, at

greatest risk of dropping out. While we do not report on the results of the quantitative data analysis here, it is part of the overall study design presented in Figure 2. This paper will highlight the results of the qualitative study, based on the interviews with 37 district and school staff members at an Urban Ring School district in Washington State.

Figure 2: Project GRADUATE Mixed Method Research Design and Components

District Profile: Meet Esperanza Unified School District

The urban ring district chosen for this case study, Esperanza School District (ESD) is considered to be among the model school districts in the state of Washington for effective data collection and management. For the purpose of this paper, the district will be called Esperanza School District. The district possesses systematic approach to reducing dropout rates, and an infrastructure that closely monitors incidences of dropout at the middle and high school level.

ESD has over 18,000 students and is located in a highly diverse region in the state with the presence of the military, Russian, Middle Eastern, Latino and Asian American immigrant communities. Thus, linguistic and cultural diversity is rich within Esperanza district. Over 35 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch, over 13 percent of the district is comprised of Latino students, and over 9 percent are classified as transitional bilingual. The graduation rates are higher than the state mean as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Graduation and Dropout Data for Esperanza School District, Class of 2010

Rate	District Percent	State Percent
Unexcused Absence Rate	.4%	.4%
Annual Dropout Rate (20019-10)	1.5	4.6
Estimated On-Time Graduation Rate	81.6	76.5
Estimated Annual Extended Graduation Rate	88.2	82.7
Actual Adjusted On-Time Cohort Graduation Rate	76.9	72.7
Actual Adjusted 5-year Cohort Extended Graduation Rate	83.0	80.7

Source: OSPI, 2012.

Another issue present for this district, as well as other districts in this state, is the proportion of students that cannot pass the HSPE (High School Proficiency Exam), the state's exit exam. The district has allocated success coordinators to solely focus on increasing passing rates on the High School Proficiency Exam and End of Course exams. This study does not include data from these on-time graduation success coordinators.

The district recently incorporated Global Scholar, which is a student information system that includes a gradebook feature (that parents can also access), curriculum management, homework help and online tutoring services from K-12 to College. This system "speaks to" another system they recently implemented, eSchools, which is an electronic registrar online system that helps schools track student attendance and absences. Together, these two data systems feed into the state CEDARS data system.

ESD also has an on-time graduation committee, made up of district level staff and high school principals that meet regularly to address their dropout data and student achievement data (e.g. grades and test scores). A district level staff member produces weekly reports for each of the high schools for school-level follow up with the student and their family members in order to find out the status of students (e.g., transferred, dropped out etc.).

Esperanza School District was selected because it has developed an infrastructure to track dropouts and has taken a proactive approach to raise student engagement levels by identifying students in need of intervention before they leave the public school system altogether. The Red, Yellow, and Green Light system is routinely used by district and school level leaders to prevent incidences of dropout altogether. It is this commitment to ensuring student persistence and graduation that sets Esperanza School District apart from others in the state—and represents a district that has a story we may learn from as many schools and districts struggle with rising dropout rates.

Key Findings
Findings from the district staff interviews, school principals, and school staff members collectively convey an ongoing process to understand the role of student achievement in persistence and on-time graduation, the role of relationships to students in preventing dropping out, and the distinct role that data oversight and use plays in identifying students early prior to them dropping out. The data also revealed the overall challenges and opportunities for school staff to better engage parents in the process of dropout prevention, by effectively exposing parents to their child's data on a regular basis.

District
One of the most significant findings was the overarching goal to graduate all of students attending Esperanza School District. One district staff member said, "Our goal is 100% it's in our strategic plan, 100% kids will graduate". What makes this district unique is their passion not

only to have students graduate on time but their dedication to making sure each student receives a quality education, even if that means taking extra time to graduate. Having leaders clearly define the larger goals of the district and providing an infrastructure that allows district and school staff to actively work to achieve these stated goals using existing data is a central feature of effective leadership and oversight (Park, Daly, & Guerra, forthcoming).

The district has implemented policies and procedures to facilitate the process of data collection, monitoring and use. These policies and procedures include: having a set structure designed specifically for data collection with one central person in charge of overseeing and maintaining data while effectively communicating these findings with district and high school staff. The person in this position communicates regularly through weekly reports and On-Time Graduation Committee meetings. At these meetings the major report, the "Red, Yellow, Green Report" is discussed. This report is one way the district works with principals to track students at risk for dropping out (See Figure 3).

The Role of a Cohesive Infrastructure

One of the most effective aspects of the On-Time Graduation Committee is its ability to hold schools publicly accountable for tracking students. After the findings are communicated to principals, the Success Coordinator utilizes the data to follow up with students and monitor their progress. With an infrastructure created specifically to prevent student dropout, this district has been successful and is seen as a model district within the state. The central themes that emerged from the district level staff interviews include: the role of a cohesive infrastructure, the relationship between the district and the state data system, and the need for professional development. Within these central themes, emergent sub-themes are also discussed in this section.

Leadership plays a key role in this district in an effort to ensure data quality and appropriate use—that is, data use for proactive solutions by district and school staff to capture students at risk of falling through the cracks due to absenteeism, low test scores, F grades, or limited credits earned (Earl & Katz, 2006). One of the key findings from the district level interviews was the positive impact of having one central person in charge of overseeing data. A district staff member is in charge of data oversight and works directly with school staff. All of the school staff dealing with student data know this district liaison and respective duties, and many conveyed how they felt comfortable going to this person with any data related questions. The district liaison explains the specific responsibilities related to providing schools with their dropout data:

> Weekly, I will run a drop out list for each high school and each middle school. And it will show me any student that was dropped out from September 1 to whatever day I'm working on that report. So every Wednesday, I am updating what we call the CDU [Credit, Dropout, Unknown] report, so every Wednesday, I update the report with all the dropouts. I send it to specific people identified by the principal at each school, at each high school and middle school, and they have until Tuesday of the next week to research any of the dropouts on that list.

These weekly reports were described as fundamental to successfully tracking students at risk of dropping out at the school level. Many school staff discussed how the district was very "effective" at relaying dropout information regularly. The report contains student name, ID number, and demographic information such as race, grade, credits earned, graduation year and guardian information.

The district Student Records Coordinator is seen as the go-to person and assigns duties to other staff in order to ensure that all students are accounted for in some way by either being enrolled back into school or coded as transferring out of district. The person in this position has made her duties clear to the rest of the staff and has created strong relationships that have been beneficial. She says, "Overall, I think if there's ever a question, what I have found is our staff doesn't hesitate to pick up the phone and call." When discussing who they ask when they have questions, almost all of the staff members talked about the Student Records Coordinator.

According to one of the district staff, this position was created "to have central oversight on that process (be)cause there really wasn't any central oversight on that process. So we've been developing, our drop out and graduation processes since that time." The creation of this additional position has played a critical role in the successful tracking and monitoring of students. The most useful duty of this role is the use of CEDARS data to create dropout reports.

The Role of the On-Time Graduation Committee

The On-Time Graduation committee consists of all the high school principals and key district staff. The On-Time Graduation committee shows the districts commitment to lowering drop out rates. With the strategic placement of key staff members on this committee they are allowing for this problem to be attacked from different sides instead of strictly putting pressure on the schools.

In 2010, the state altered its calculation formula for its dropouts to adhere to NCLB reporting standards (OSPI, 2010). This policy change compelled all districts to move from a single year dropout analysis to a four-year cohort based model, placing pressure on districts to graduate all students in a four-year time frame. Even though federal law allows certain students extra time to complete graduation requirements, if they do not graduate in the specified time frame they are considered dropouts. English Language Learners (ELL) and students classified as Special Education account for two student subgroups that can possibly skew the dropout data. One district staff member describes the challenge with the cohort model in documenting accurate graduation rates:

> [ELLs] were given more years [to graduate] via an IEP or based on an ELL assessment. They were given three more years, so instead of, 2012 its 2015 or 2016. Now, under the cohort graduate requirements, they didn't graduate so they are, calculated out.

Many of the district staff members concurred with this sentiment, and conveyed their concern over this dilemma. One district staff member explained:

> I have issues, with our ELL and our Special Ed, that going with the four-year cohort graduation calculation, …oh wow… you can cure sever disabilities within four years? I just think that by doing that you know they're putting another barrier for students. And the practicality of that is just discouraging.

A similar dilemma exists for English Language Learners being measured by the cohort graduation rate according to district staff members. By law ELL students are allowed extra time to complete graduation requirements. However, a potential implication of this policy change would be that these subgroups would be pushed out of high school early. English learners in Washington and the nation already have some of the lowest academic achievement scores and highest dropout rates (Rumberger & Rodriguez, 2002; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Gandara & Hopkins, 2010; Rumberger, 2011; Orfield, 2004).

That implication is highly problematic specifically for students with severe disabilities that require special services. As one staff member said,

> So a 4-year cohort or a 5-year cohort would miss those kids all together.
> If we graduated them at 18, then they couldn't go to the 18 to 21 year-old program.
> They are now a graduate, you don't fund graduates. Its little glitchy things like that.

This staff member describes the dilemma of not being able to fund students with special services because the state does not "fund graduates." If students are still in the system as high school students, they remain eligible for public services that high school districts provide for students with disabilities that have not yet received a high school diploma.

Strategies

In response to the struggles described above this school district has developed innovative strategies to graduate on time while still providing a quality education and academically preparing students. One of those strategies was to move to a free summer school term for students that are lacking credits. Prior to this change students had to pay a fee to take courses during the summer. The school staff realized that the students attending summer school were the ones that could afford to go and usually were students trying to get ahead and not make up credits. One staff member described this change:

> So about 3-4 years ago, we converted to a, I don't know what we call it, a subsidized summer school. Summer school is now free. And then we take the red, yellow, green report, kids that are credit deficit for where they should be in their career, and then we target them, success coordinators meets with them talks to parents and signs them up for summer school for credit recovery, and its provided at no charge, they just need to show up.

This district staff member explained how funding summer school is a priority at ESD to ensure that the youth in need of classes have the opportunity to earn the credits they need to graduate. The staff member describes how they were able to subsidize summer school:

> We've been funding [summer school] out of lots of different pots of money in order to make it free in order to get kids back on track, I don't know how many more years were going to be able to do that sort of thing. We've been anticipating these cuts so we've been carrying over, saving money, to do summer school. My statement to anybody is that you can't expect something different if you don't provide resources to make it happen.

The districts commitment to the students is evident through their commitment to intervening and addressing student needs through their innovative, data driven strategies. Such leadership efforts, that take action on district data, is an effective response to accountability—that is, data analysis informs how to better create an infrastructure that supports district and school leaders to ultimately serve students (Chrispeels, et. a., 2008).

The Relationship to the State in Adhering to Data Requirements

Esperanza school district represents a data-driven school district. The district relies heavily on their data system to initiate intervention approaches either at the district or school level. A staff member describes the data chain:

We get the weekly reports from [Staff Name] on every single student that has dropped out. It goes to every success coordinator, goes to every principal, and myself and [Staff Name] we get that once a week for every school, middle and high, and we seek out that information".

This specific report provides information on students that have already left the school in order to try to return the student to school or locate where they have transferred. In addition to this report there are also precautionary reports to identify those students in danger of dropping out.

One of the most useful reporting tools are the "F Report" According to one of the staff members, "is every principal coming on an F report. And so that runs off the current active grade book…so what we do with an F report is reach into an active grade book on a day, pull where kids are in that stream of where their grade is at that time. and then the F report says how many kids are failing 1 class, how many are failing 2 classes, tells us what classes they failing, who their teachers are…" This report allows the success coordinators to identify and connect with those students at any given point of the year and provides early intervention. It also provides an opportunity for individualized support depending on the students needs. For example, if a student is struggling in one or two areas the success coordinator can focus on those specific courses. In addition to the "F-Reports" this district creates what they refer to as a "Red, Yellow, Green" Report as a way to create an on-target graduation spectrum. A district level staff member explained the report:

If a kid is a green light, that means he has passed the assessments he needed to and the credits and he is on track, yellow means their short credits and may or may not have passed the assessments, and red means they are in trouble in both places.

The Red, Yellow, Green report provides the basis of the On-Time Graduation meetings and allows for a visual form of accountability. At these meetings the reports for each individual high school is posted on the board and acts as a form of accountability. Figure 3 illustrates the Reading Scores, one measure used to examine students' progress toward meeting testing requirements.

Figure 3: Sample Presentation of Red, Yellow, Green Light Analysis of Reading Scores for the Class of 2012
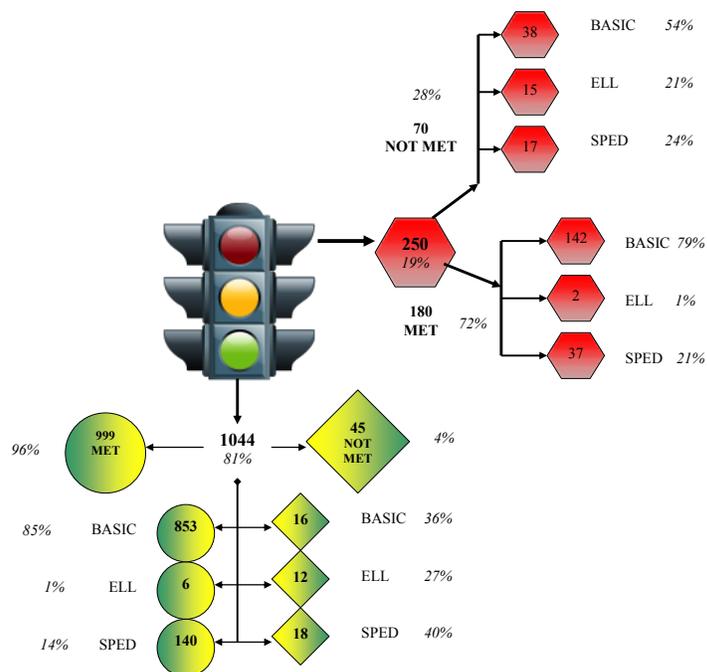
Source: Analysis conducted in 2011 by Esperanza District Staff.

This system is also done for course performance. Each week the committee returns to see if their numbers have improved and if not they discuss the issues and possible solutions. This collaboration among school and district leaders acts not only as a form of accountability but also acts a best practices forum so that staff members can see what works and what doesn't with other schools allowing them to tailor those strategies to the needs of their schools. This approach has been documented as a collaborative leadership approach to giving data meaning and basing decisions on a data driven approach (Parker, Daly, Guerra, forthcoming; Marsh et., al., 2006).

Need For Professional Development
Another key finding from this study is the need for more professional development regarding data management. When asked about initial training involving data most of the district level staff stated that they had not participated in formal training. Many commented that the training they received was a "learn as you go" approach or that one central administrator within the district had been trained and was the point person for questions around data input, collection, monitoring, and adherence to state reporting requirements.

When we asked what kind of professional development trainings staff would like to receive, they responded with a variety of suggestions. For example one person suggested, "some of the school staff, office staff have not received the kind of really practical end-user information that would illuminate, for them, how critical it is to have accurate data in our system to upload to CEDARS." She went on to explain that there are times when people are not familiar with certain codes and are not sure how or why you use them. The staff member further commented

how "OSPI can do slightly better in regards to a training document, especially for new employees."

The need for professional development among school staff in particular was a recurring theme. At times staff did not know, nor could they differentiate between the role of Global Scholar, eSchools, or the state CEDARS data system. Some staff for example, were not aware that their data was fed into the larger state data system. Rather, they believed that only the district required specific data to be collected. In addition, school principals were often pulling their own reports and creating their own excel spreadsheets from their school level data, rather than having this information pulled for them at the district level. Such practices take away from their time with teachers or engaging in other leadership activities. However, the fact that these principals took a very hands on approach to collecting and using their own school level data was also a key finding that illuminates the key role that data plays not only among district level staff, but at the school leadership level.

School Leadership
The role of school leadership and staff is key to ensuring data accuracy, effective use, and informed decision making (Marsh, Pane & Hamilton, 2006). This section highlights the processes for data collection, use and potential for developing mechanisms that engage parents, teachers and staff in the process of addressing students who exhibit worrisome patterns in achievement (e.g., F grades) or behavior (e.g., absenteeism). The school leadership section includes analysis of data from school principals, staff that work directly with data management systems and school success coordinators.

The Role of Data
Data appears to play a significant role in the district, as the interviews from district level staff conveyed. At the school level however, there was variation in the usage of the school level data by principals. Select principals played a more active role in pulling and analyzing reports such as absences, discipline data, and grade reports. Two middle school principals also created their own excel spreadsheets from data extracted from Global Scholar to use when meeting with teachers about specific students. One middle school principal described the potential of using the school level data and technology to better inform parents about their child's progress or challenges:

> The baseline is that you have to have online access. We're basically inviting them [parents] to use this tool. It's set up to have the capacity for us to manipulate the settings to say if a grade gets below a 60% or 70%, whatever threshold, it'll send out notifications from us - automatic notifications. The parent sets up their preferences and basically they choose their level of communication. It's conceivable that a parent who wants a daily text message of how their kids are doing would be ultimately able to get that. Or they could get nothing if they chose. But, those are bells and whistles that aren't yet activated.

The new system adopted by the district has features that are still being phased in at across the schools in the district. However, the capacity to partner with parents around data exists with this newly adopted system. One of the limitations with Global Scholar however, is that the middle school principal notes is the ability to offer these results in Spanish or other languages for bilingual parents:

> [Global Scholar] is set up to, in theory, to work with all sorts of different communication devices. But again, the pre-requisite is you have to have web access. And I don't know the language piece. I'm not sure what the capacity is to reach parents in multiple languages. I don't have an answer to that.

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The fact that the system does not yet have the capacity to deliver information in multiple languages is a critical finding, as the utility of gradebook results are limited for families that are not fully literate in English. In an opportunity to learn study conducted by Contreras et.al., (2008), the results conveyed concerns among Latino parents who experienced limited access to all forms of translation services when interacting with schools. This limitation is likely to present a challenge for Spanish speaking parents in the district.

Using Data to Monitor High School Readiness & Preparation
Data at the middle school level was not only used to monitor student dropout or "warning signs" but to also ensure that middle school students were on track to be high school ready. As several research studies have documented, the middle school level is a critical stage in a student's academic career as it prepares them for high school and beyond (Belfanz, 2009; Contreras, et. al., 2008) and is the point where students are largely tracked for college (Wimberly & Noeth, 2005; Gandara & Contreras, 2009). Wimberly and Noeth (2005) document the critical role that middle school plays in college readiness. Thus, monitoring high school readiness is crucial to ensure that students progress through high school and into college. Middle schools within ESD includes high school readiness benchmarks in their school improvement plans, as one principal explains:

> In each of our school improvement plans, we have a section [on] high school readiness. How ready are you for high school? Are you taking a high school equivalent course in 8th grade? Are you enrolled in algebra? These gatekeeping kinds of predictors of future success. Not to give a kid a number and say congratulations, you're high school ready or you're way off. But as fodder for getting together with families to say during our transition activities.

As the principal explains, the benchmarks or high school readiness guidelines are the basis for the teachers' interaction with both parents and then with the high school counselor, so the student has a clear idea of expectations early, and then what to expect as they transition into high school. Data is used to provide feedback to parents on how their child is progressing with respect to meeting the high school readiness benchmarks or if any interventions are necessary to get the student high school ready (e.g., summer school, academic supports).

The Role of Success Coordinators
Various themes emerged from semi-structured interviews with Success Coordinators for On-Time Graduation that exposed differing practices, duties, and expectations within one position. It is important to acknowledge that this urban ring school district in Washington State spans across two very diverse cities and though all respondents work within the same school district, each school confronts their own unique challenges. The key emerging themes are: 1) the ultimate goal is for every student to graduate with a high school degree, 2) the "at-risk" population exhibits distinct characteristic with English Language Learners being the largest population "at-risk" of dropping out, 3) every student is different and thus intervention must be individualized, 4) the persistent challenges in combating drop outs are student attitudes, lack of parental involvement, and high stakes testing, 5) data use and availability, and 6) the need for professional development in order to best serve the "at-risk" student population. We also present a discussion of the central themes emerging from the middle school success coordinators.

Helping Students Graduate

All Success Coordinators expressed the need for students to obtain their high school education, whether it is through completing their high school diploma or an alternative program. Every effort is made to keep a student enrolled and on track to graduate with a high school diploma; however, all expressed the need to be clear and realistic with an individuals possibility to graduate on-time but most importantly graduate altogether. Every effort is made to assist students; tutoring and credit recovery options are offered, but throughout, there was an agreement amongst all Success Coordinators that these students needed to obtain some form of a high school degree. They were very conscious of the disadvantage their students would find themselves in if they did not at minimum, have a high school education as they all acknowledge that in todays society, at minimum one needs a high school degree to be competitive. This finding, the importance of a high school education, is consistent with a report from Bauman and Graf (2003) noting "…high school has gone from being the mark of the educated minority of the population to the minimum education level for 4 out of 5 adults" (p.2).

With Esperanza School Districts' wide-ranging diversity, the role of Success Coordinators varied across each high school campus. Half were assigned to work with the entire high school population, another worked almost exclusively with junior and seniors students, and one particular Success Coordinator was responsible for engaging middle school students as an early intervention method. In one particular school, the newly hired Success Coordinator along with administrative leaders decided to "re-define this coordinator position." This school has not only taken on the task of redefining this position but also "creating a different culture. A proactive, let's get them before they fail" culture.

Success Coordinator responsibilities can be classified into two categories: 1) preventive and 2) reactionary, with most responsibilities falling within the reactionary category. Findings showed a consistency amongst preventive measure throughout the school district; however, one school in particular expanded their preventive measures to incorporate the surrounding feeder middle schools. Additionally, Success Coordinators establish relationships with the local middle school counselors. Through this relationship, students for which "student awareness" efforts were not sufficient were identified early and given an opportunity to engage in a mentor program at the commencement of high school.

> I run a mentor program for freshman and sophomores, and 8th grade counselors identify them as kids who have responded to interventions in the past. And they feel are high risk for drop out, and then there's criteria that we have.

Through these early intervention efforts, Success Coordinators establish a line of communication between middle school and high school where students benefit from early identification and assistance before they dropout of school. Such indicators such as low test scores, low grades, and a large number of absences, begin as early as middle school and continue through the early years of high school if interventions are not made (Wells, 1989; Rumberger, 1995; 2011; Contreras, 2011).

Though preventive responsibilities were unique to one particular school, reactionary efforts were consistent throughout all high schools, with the "drop in" population, students who have re-engaged into the high school after dropping out, receiving unique attention. In identifying students for reactionary efforts, Success Coordinators identified two specific reports that assisted in identifying "at-risk" students: the 'red, yellow, and green light report' and the 'F report'. The 'F report' identifies students "at risk" of failing currently enrolled courses and becoming credit deficient.

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> I also run F reports which list the current grade. So if there's a kid who's a green student but failing every single class, they come on to our attention so that they don't shift into all of a sudden they're way off track, but nobody noticed to try to bring them back.

Students identified by the 'F report' are referred to the extended day program, which aims to provide academic support to students, getting them back on track to graduate high school. A success coordinator discusses her role:

> We have an extended day program here that I help run, and that is looking at kids who have 69% or lower. And there's tutorial after school and then an activity bus that will take kids to whatever bus stop they normally get dropped off at. So making sure that those kids are identified, and that they're given the opportunity--they have the opportunity to stay after school if they want to get help in those areas.

Additionally, with the 'red, yellow, and green report', which monitors students credit attainment, they are able to identify moderate "at-risk" students who are off track for on-time graduation (yellow) and high "at-risk" students (red) who are off track to graduate altogether.

> We have the credit recovery summer school that we do at [Esperanza] Public School District, and part of my job is to, as I'm tracking kids who's failed what, would they benefit from taking the credit recovery summer school… I work specifically with the students who we call red, which are off track, or yellow, which are the right on the line students. But I monitor all the students' credits, and then implement meeting times, and some type of intervention for the yellow and red students.

Success Coordinators also run a credit recovery program for seniors who are off track from on-time graduation due to being slightly credit deficient. This program, called "Senior Slam," takes place throughout the school year.

> …senior slam, which is only about seven to nine days because we've had so many snow days the last couple of years. But that's like a slam dunk. They come in-- we sign them up only if they need to make up a couple of classes because seven to nine days is not a lot of time. And they have to be close to 50%.

Through this reactionary effort, seniors are given a last opportunity to graduate with their graduating class. If this program is insufficient, Success Coordinators attempt to enroll them into the summer school credit recovery program. Additionally, new efforts are currently being planned within one particular high school. As previously mentioned, there is one Success Coordinator who is currently tasked with redefining her position but additional creating new intervention methods. "We just created a credit retrieval class for math. We're working on, social studies. We're working on that." Their ultimate goal is see these students graduate.

Turning Drop outs into Drop In's

A special task assigned to all Success Coordinators is the tracking and the re-engagement of students who have dropped out. Their goal is to locate students, and have students drop back into school so they can graduate and earn their diploma.

> I do the CDU [Credit, Dropout, & Unknown] reports for the drop-outs to try to get them back, to try to find out where they went and that kind of thing… that's like follow-up calls, calling the parents, emailing, that kind of stuff, even if they don't want to come back here and necessarily, trying to get them engaged to go somewhere else.

Due to the special characteristic of the population returning to school, Success Coordinators have unique reactionary measures for those who do decided to re-engage. Efforts include one on one mentoring, tutoring, and individualistic planning sessions in addition to all reactionary measures explained earlier.

It is evident from these findings that these Success Coordinators are held responsible for various tasks ranging in importance; however, one thing is unclear, is one Success Coordinator sufficient in accomplishing all these responsibilities?

Defining and Serving The "At-Risk"

Defining the "at-risk" student population was difficult for most Success Coordinators. Throughout the interviews, Success Coordinators acknowledged their were apparent trends amongst the students labeled "at-risk;" however, one generalizable definition was inadequate as students do not need to exhibit all characteristic to be "at-risk," students can display simply one to be "at-risk." There was an apparent gender trend found in all four participating high school; Success Coordinators reported a small but significant difference between male and females students, with males being more likely "at-risk."

> I've had more male students that are behind. And even if they were kind of sort of even between the females and males, females seems to be more interested in getting where they want to go, and that's walking across the stage on time.

One Success Coordinator further explained that many of the Latino and Russian males "at-risk" within her school was due to the lack of attendance. She explained, "… they start working, either working with family members, under the table, whatever they're doing, because they're trying to help support the families." Many of these males become "at-risk" simply because of the needs of their families, not necessarily because they are bad students or lack academic ability.

When inquiring regarding racial trends, only one Success Coordinator directly spoke upon the trend within her school; all others refrained from answering or framed their answers in socioeconomic terms. The Success Coordinator who spoke upon the racial trends at her school stated:

> ...the majority of kids I'm working with that are credit deficient, that's just because of the population is probably Caucasian. I would then say Hispanic or Latino, African American. And that's just because of the balance. And Russian.

Though this reporting shows a clearly diverse cultural population, it fails to paint an accurate picture of the identity of students in relationship to their demographic proportion. However, there was a consistent trend amongst racially diverse students. Many Success Coordinators reported that amongst these groups there was a large portion of students who are constantly moving from one school to another. These students are often referred to as "kids in transition."

Though most Success Coordinators had difficulties defining the "at-risk" population, they were able to identify specific signals that they believed assisted in identifying students as "at-risk." There was a consensus on three signals: family instability, drug and alcohol use and attendance issues. Success Coordinators identified family instability, especially concerning finances, as an increasing trend due to the current national economic climate. Drug and alcohol was connected to academic failure because "if kids become drug and alcohol involved. I mean they're not engaged, their brain isn't-- it's chemically altered, and they're not interested." However, the most pressing warning signal identified by all Success Coordinators was attendance, as one success coordinator explains:

> Attendance is huge. And culturally I know we've worked with certain cultures where school is not, academics is not what it is in our society.

Success Coordinators identified a new trend, a significant increase in the English Language Learners and the overall diversity of the population.

> ...probably the biggest increase I think in the last couple years at least would probably be students coming in from Vietnam. And they're not necessarily coming straight over from Vietnam. They're coming from another State, but they still need ELL services.

As the ELL population diversifies, Success Coordinators expressed a lack of resources available, specifically related to communication. Schools lack translators and adults with cultural understanding for this new growing population and thus bringing about new and unique challenges. The Success Coordinators did note that not all ELL students are "at-risk" of dropping out or far from graduating.

> ELL students, ... Credit-wise most of them do really well, and they try hard. They really want to succeed. The assessment testing is their biggest challenge most of the time, unless they start dropping because of needing to work and take care of family…the majority of the ELL students that I work with, not all, on transcript paper, they're not off trajectory to graduate.

The trends in Esperanza school district mirror national patterns, with ELL students having difficulty on assessment exams, particularly exit exams (Abedi & Gandara, 2006; Gandara & Hopkins, 2010; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Contreras, 2011).

Intervention Efforts

Intervention efforts are seen as a critical aspect to achieving the overarching school and district goal of graduating every student on time:

> I think the one thing that we, as a country, we need to see that
> every child gets the education that they deserve, and we need to see
> every child graduate from high school...every child can graduate
> from high school given the right support. And it's all individual.
> Every child situation is different. So you have to meet them where
> they are, not where you necessarily want them to be.

Recognizing that "every single kid is different" was a fundamental component in the Success Coordinators ability to assist "at-risk" students. Listening to each student and assessing each student's individual needs was key in determining the most effective intervention effort for a student. Success Coordinators expressed that each student has their own unique characteristics, that there was not one solution that fit the needs of all "at-risk" students. As such, Success Coordinators recognized that they most have a conversation with these students, and truly listen, listen "to find what-- really what can I do to help them, and that's totally an individual-- each kid needs a different thing or whatever the case is." Once communication has been established, Success Coordinators attempted to create a team mentality, where each student has an input in planning the next step. Giving students ownership was conducive to successful engagement. Moreover, Success Coordinators agreed that the number one component in retaining students was letting them know that there was someone who cared, someone who was going to help them succeed and not give up on them.

The Challenges

There were several challenges that success coordinators noted, which ranged from student attitudes, lack of parental involvement, testing and having an EL background. For success coordinators, who were not bilingual, serving the needs of EL students was particularly challenging in the district:

> What I've been noticing lately is when I call home, mom and dad or guardians don't
> speak English. And so I'm trying to communicate with them to let them know that the
> student needs to come after school in order to get credit retrieval, or in order to get
> support for their class. They're being given this opportunity. So I can talk to the student
> all I want, but we don't have that backing from home. Sometimes I'm able to talk to an
> older sibling. Sometimes I have to translate through a younger sibling. And I don't really
> know-- well yeah, that's a trend as I'm seeing a lot of students who are ELL slipping
> through cracks."

The Success Coordinators often conflated being bilingual with lack of parental engagement. This assumption is very typical, as EL students and their families are often seen as disengaged from school because of the lack of familiarity with the English language (Contreras, 2011; Contreras et. al., 2008). However, the reality is that bilingual parents often come to this country to pursue educational opportunities for their children. (Contreras, 2011; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Fraga et. al., 2010, Suarez Orozco, et. al., 2008).

High Stakes Testing

Another real challenge for Success Coordinators is responding to and addressing the high stakes accountability frameworks that the school and district must follow. In the state of Washington, low-income, Latino, underrepresented and EL students experience lower rates than their peers who attend schools in higher SES communities (Contreras, et.al, 2008). Success coordinators explain this dilemma:

> I worry about it being a graduation requirement...But in all honesty, there's some kids that can't pass these tests. They could have 20 million credits on their transcript, and for whatever reason, some kids choke on tests. Some kids just don't do well. And what do you do?

Although there is a sense of desperation among Success Coordinators to seek out students who did not pass the High School Proficiency exam, they see their role as tracking students down to provide them with options to graduate, such as producing a Certificate of Achievement, which is a portfolio option that OSPI allows, or pursue a GED.

> Students that I'm working with right now that I'm trying to track down. They dropped out earlier this year because all they needed was to pass the HSPE, the High School Proficiency Exam. They already took it, they didn't pass it. So these students had all their credits. They had everything done that they needed except for that HSPE. And what I'm trying to do now is try and get them to take the GED.

> Data

All Success Coordinator acknowledged that data was a key component in assisting their efforts. Though their responsibilities relied heavily upon data usage, Success Coordinators themselves do not actively access data. A Success Coordinator expressed that "the district is kind of doing it from the district level and feeding it to us at the school level;" however, all Success Coordinators had knowledge of the district data program and acknowledged that "[the] reports, everything that I get is coming from—[our district system], we have a new system this year, the eSchool Plus." When Success Coordinators were asked what type of information was stored in the district system, their answers were limited to the information from on the reports they were provided weekly.

When Success Coordinator were asked about their access and usage of data from the states longitudinal data system, CEDARS, there was confusion regarding the difference between the states and district data system. Upon clarify and explaining what the CEDARS system was, a common response was: "I don't have access to CEDARS. I get that information from the district...And I probably should actually, but maybe that's a question I'll have to ask somebody." Additionally, one Success Coordinators acknowledged receiving CEDARS information from the school registrars: "I get that information once it goes through [the registrar]. So she uses it [CEDARS] and then I find out from her. So I don't use it directly."

> The Need for Personal Development

There was a consensus amongst Success Coordinators regarding the need for professional development, but particularly relevant professional development to their goals as Success Coordinators.

> I really would like to see not just myself educated more, but as a whole, educators, administrators. Because some people they only see the bottom line. And to me it's like you have to be sensitive to what's going on. You have to understand.

Success Coordinators are required a minimum of ten training hours; however, it is up to each individual Success Coordinator to find relevant training. Many times, selection of training is

dependent on the resources available. Due to financial restraints, training hours are generally met by attending basic district trainings, which may or may not necessarily be relevant to their responsibilities. Success Coordinators are therefore left seeking no cost professional training opportunities or otherwise having out of pocket job-training expenses.

The Role of Middle School Success Coordinators

The middle school success coordinator role in ESD is unique. Two middle schools have the presence of success coordinators that are funded by a six-year GEAR UP grant. The success coordinators will work with the middle school students and will follow these students into one high school in the district. Being part of GEAR UP affords these success coordinators a level of ongoing professional development and an infrastructure for support and engagement among parents.

The role of the middle school success coordinator also looks very different from the high school level. However, there are some similarities in approaches, as success coordinators ensure that students are academically on track to succeed in high school, and they work to build a strong connection to students. A central priority among middle school success coordinators is getting students high school ready and addressing concerns about courses before these students transition into high school or become disengaged altogether. For example, a middle school success coordinator described her role as building rapport:

> There's 360-something kids, plus or minus here, 7th graders alone. So just getting to know them all and to see my face and that I'm another resource or safe place for them to come if they're struggling academically, if they need school supplies or whatever it may be to help support them.

Another approach among the two success coordinators at the middle school level is to assist students explore their personal interests. One success coordinator described her role as "keeping that spark alive" among students:

> Just keeping that spark alive of what [aspects of Esperanza School District] that interests them or their abilities -- what makes them get up and come to school, whether it's soccer practice or whatever. And then, maybe opening their eyes up to different careers in sports, for example. Or if they like music…The main goal right now is just building those relationships and keeping the spark alive for what they want to do.

Utilizing Test Scores and Accountability
School staff reported using state data to determine students that are in need of extra academic support. School success coordinators at the high school level described the follow up process for students scoring low on the MSP (the state's Measure of Student Progress) and on grade reports.

> We will look at data like the MSP scores, your assessments, and if we see students that are below what we'd like them to be, then I'll pull those kids in. The grade reports, using our software system to find the D or the F kids, and maybe just talk to them and find out what's going on. That's probably the main concern—academic[s]."

The approach of using data that is part of the state's accountability framework in addition to real-time performance data such as grade reports, has been recommended as an effective method for taking action on the data (Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton, 2006). School staff within ESD are not solely using annual test score results to determine their early warning indicators, they are consistently assessing a multitude of variables that are both academic and behavioral (e.g.,

absences) and are part of the district and state's larger accountability framework. This approach elevates the role that data plays within Esperanza district, given the data greater meaning and influence over practice (Chrispeels, et. al., 2008; Park, Daly & Guerra, forthcoming).

Conclusion

Few states utilize their statewide data systems as early warning systems to prevent student dropouts. This case study found that an infrastructure for data collection, oversight and reporting are key to developing an early warning system and preventing incidences of student dropout. Several approaches used by Esperanza school district, such as meeting credit thresholds, passing classes, number of absences, their "red, yellow and green light system" may also serve as analytical points for schools and the district to flag students with profiles that make them candidates at risk of school failure and departure. Districts that utilize data to help drive decision making within the district ultimately serves all stakeholders as they attempt to best serve their students (Laird, 2006) and ensure they remain in school, meet state standards, and graduate high school ready for their next step.

The findings related to the infrastructure for data collection, oversight and use, at both the district and school levels illuminate the importance of open communication and clarity of expectations (Parker, Daly, & Guerra, forthcoming). This feature that distinguishes Esperanza as a leader, has also been a challenge for the district and remains a work in progress. For example, school Success Coordinators were not fully conversant in the full scope of data that they use. They were unable to articulate how they contributed to data accuracy nor how the school level data feeds into the larger CEDARS data system. This finding is important to note, as districts that appear to have highly functional processes can always strive to do better—to achieve their overarching goal. While the district staff and school principals were clear about the data processes, school level staff were less clear other than the tasks that fit within the narrow scope of their job description.

This research also revealed the importance of ongoing and regular communication between district level leaders in charge of data oversight and school principals. The weekly on-time graduation committee meetings are an example of open communication and collective responsibility between the district and schools to actively monitor and act upon dropout and school achievement data.

One area that remains a challenge is open communication and professional development between the district and school level staff overseeing day-to-day data management. The "learn as you go" approach noted by school staff members revealed the need for a more systematic effort to provide guidance and oversight on effective school level practices. The fact that staff from all the high schools noted their own initiative to meet together to "share strategies and approaches" conveys a void in professional development and clear expectations at the school staff level.

Utilizing the real-time data routinely collected by schools to keep Latino, low-income and all students in middle and high schools throughout the duration of their schooling experience is likely to raise school, district and state graduation rates, and significantly contribute to mitigating the dropout crisis among underrepresented students in the state of Washington and the nation. This study informs research and policy discourse surrounding middle school preparation, high school completion, college readiness and the infrastructure and leadership necessary to actively engage with data sources and intervene in a timely manner when students show signs of falling through the cracks.

Summary of Key Findings

The following key findings are used to develop a set of viable policy considerations and recommendations for districts as they continue to work on implementing effective data collection, use and reporting practices.

1) An infrastructure for oversight & consistency is critical for reducing dropouts & increasing on time graduation.
2) Regular and ongoing communication creates a shared level of commitment, team-level accountability & solution-driven approach to reducing dropout rates.
3) Principals play critical role in setting tone and timely response to prospective dropouts
4) Success coordinator, teacher and school level efforts most effective when "all hands on deck"

Policy Recommendations & Considerations

The following policy considerations and recommendations highlight the importance of district leadership, oversight and school cooperation. An ongoing balance must exist in order for data collection and use to be as relevant and useful as possible.

1) *Data must be routinely used & monitored for accuracy to have shared meaning and collective action by district leaders, school leaders, and staff on the ground.* Data collection for the sake of having data is not relevant unless it is utilized to achieve a shared goal. Data can be a strong and powerful tool to achieve district and school strategic goals and support all students achieve their potential.

2) *Districts must maximize the potential of existing student records programs (e.g., Global Scholar) to communicate with parents in the language of their choice.* Many programs have the capacity to translate student results into Spanish. Districts may "activate" such settings to be more culturally responsive to the linguistic diversity in their respective districts, particularly for Spanish-speaking parents.

3) *Greater professional development at school and staff level to identify "early warning signs" among the students they serve, and to code students appropriately.* Staff in particular wanted greater professional development rather than responding in "reactive mode" to state requests and new accountability requirements.

4) *An annual overview for registrars, success coordinators and school principals on the communication process may help all stakeholders to better understand overarching data structure.* This finding may be applied to all districts in Washington to improve the data collection practices and enhance understanding on data uses within district contexts.

5) *Districts have the potential to utilize CEDARS and School data to develop an Early Warning System for both dropping out & college readiness (A College-Ready Predictive System).* Many districts and states have looked at the drop out phenomenon. But very few are using their data systems to predict college readiness from middle school. This study advocates for utilizing data to this end, and using it both to monitor students at risk of dropping out as well as those at risk of not performing academically, realizing they are not mutually exclusive data points. The longitudinal data system has great potential to create models that are useful to everyday

practice, dropout prevention, and for reducing gaps in achievement (See Appendix for Quantitative Models Developed).

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of district level and school leadership and an infrastructure for effective data management that supports a common goal. As the district staff member in charge of data oversight commented, "the ultimate goal for every kid is that they graduate on time. My ultimate goal is every kid graduates, secondary goal is that they graduate on time." The tone set by district level leadership sets the bar high for school principals and staff and gives the data practical meaning (Parker, Daly, Guerra, forthcoming) and a foundation for implementing, refining and monitoring efforts to reduce the number of dropouts. As districts and schools continue to chip away at the dropout crisis that remains a very real barrier for many communities, using existing data in more efficient and practical ways can contribute to keeping more youth in the school settings and positively alter student pathways.

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APPENDIX:
STATISTICAL MODELS FOR EVALUATING LIKELIHOOD OF DROPOUT & COLLEGE READINESS

Secondary Data Analysis

LOGISTIC REGRESSION
- 6TH GRADERS (FALL SEMESTER PROFILE)
- 8TH GRADERS (FALL SEMESTER PROFILE)
- 9TH GRADERS (END OF ACADEMIC YEAR)
- 10TH GRADERS (END OF ACADEMIC YEAR)
- 11TH GRADERS (END OF ACADEMIC YEAR-TO CAPTURE LAP STUDENTS)

THE MODELS:

MODEL 1:   LOGISITC REGRESSION TO PREDICT ON-TIME GRADUATION USING A COMMON SET OF PREDICTORS

MODEL 2:   LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS TO PREDICT "HIGH SCHOOL READINESS"

MODEL 3:   LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS TO PREDICT "COLLEGE READINESS"

CEDARS Variables for Analyses
- GRADES (GPA)*
- ABSENCES
- EL STATUS*
- COURSE CREDITS EARNED
- MATH TEST SCORES
- MSP (MEASURE OF STUDENT PROGRESS (6-8TH GRADE)
- HSPE SCORES (10TH GRADERS)
- END OF COURSE EXAM SCORES (10TH GRADERS)
- FREE REDUCED LUNCH (SES INDICATOR)
- LAP STUDENTS (LEARNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM)*
- UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH (NO LISTED PARENT/GUARDIAN)
- IMMIGRANT STUDENT (2011-2012 FIRST YEAR OF THIS CODE [B-31])

District/School Level Variables (not in CEDARS)
eSchools Data File
- COURSE "TRACK" (BASIC, HIGH ACHIEVERS, ETC.)
- BEHAVIOR/CITIZENSHIP GRADES
- EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAM INVOLVEMENT (GEAR UP)
- EXTRACURRICULAR SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT (SPORTS)

APPENDIX: BEST PRACTICES FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

Name of Program	Contact Information	State	Main Component	Program Description	Collaborating partners
Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS)			*Students:* counseling, training in social and task-related problem solving skills, and recognition for academic excellence. *School:* recognition and bonding activities, frequent teacher feedback to parents and students, and intensive attendance monitoring. *Family:* engaged parents in training to increase their participation in school activities and to support their student's academic improvement, and encouraged more frequent contact with teachers and school administrators. *Community:* provided a bridge between school and home needs and community services (including mental health, social services, drug and alcohol treatment programs, job training, and sports and recreation programs)	"Founded on the idea that student success is shaped by three inter-related contexts— family, school and community—Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success (ALAS) demonstrates an effective dropout prevention and reentry/recovery strategy that strengthens student supports in each context and builds stronger linkages among them."	
21st Century Community Learning Centers	Pilla Parker, **Telephone:** (202) 260-3710 **Toll-Free Telephone:** (800) 872-5327 or (800) USA-LEARN **Fax:** (202) 260-8969		"To establish community learning centers that help students in high-poverty, low-performing schools meet academic achievement standards; to offer a broad array of additional services designed to complement the regular academic program; and to offer families of students opportunities for educational development."	"This program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs;	

				and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children."	
Mobile County Public School System	Martha Peek Phone: (251) 221-4154	AL	A Graduation Advocate: provides academic guidance and support *Intensive, supplemental instruction in reading and mathematics *Summer bridge program to strengthen students' transition to high school *engaging and rigorous academic program that integrates the Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies and College Board's SpringBoard curricula and that includes Advanced Placement and dual enrollment courses. *Diploma Plus program for over-age and under-credited students.	"The Mobile County Public School System will implement a systemic middle and high school dropout prevention, intervention, and recovery initiative at Ben Cato Rain High School and its feeder school, Palmer Pillans Middle School."	City of Mobile, Bishop State Community College, Mobile Works (Workforce Investment Board) and the Region 9 Southwest Workforce Development Council.
San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools	Phone: (909) 888-3228	CA	*Establish roles and responsibilities *Use the EWS tool *Review the EWS data *Interpret the EWS data *Assign and provide interventions *monitor students *Evaluate and refine the EWS process	"The National High School Center has devised a seven-step Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS) implementation process to support the establishment and implementation of early warning systems for identifying and monitoring students who are at risk for dropping out of high school."	
Los Angeles Unified School District	Tawnya L. Perry Phone: (213) 241-3844	CA	*A summer bridge program for incoming, at-risk ninth graders *Academic instruction *Opportunity to earn high school credits before entering high school *Parent Bridge program: provides families with information about the transition to high school and	"The Los Angeles Unified School District Diploma Project is an integrated, dropout intervention, prevention and recovery initiative that will serve Belmont, Huntington Park, Fremont, Gardena, Dorsey and San Fernando High Schools and six of	Collaborating partners include City Year, the City Attorney's Office, Alliance for a Better Community, and United Way of Greater LA.

			graduation requirements. *Targeted case management approach *Graduation Promotion Counselors: monitor attendance and grades of students; coordinate the delivery of comprehensive services and support *Re-Entry Graduation Promotion Counselors: focus on the recovery of students who have been absent for 60 or more days, assisting students in accessing social and employment-related services and in identifying an appropriate option to continue their education.	their feeder middle schools."	
Pasadena Unified School District	Sonia Rodarte Phone: 626-396-3600	CA	*Intensive counseling: implementation of a new counseling and intervention model developed by community partner Learning Works! *Mustangs Mentoring program for high-risk students to Rose City and three middle schools. *Dropout Recovery: out-of-school youth with a single point of access for returning to school.	"Pasadena Unified School District will use HSGI grant funds to advance its comprehensive strategy to reduce the dropout rate."	Learning Works!, Flintridge Center, the Western Justice Center Foundation, and the Office of the Mayor.
Riverside County Office of Education	Diana Walsh-Reuss Phone: (951) 826-6602	CA	*Early warning system or Dropout Risk Index: available to all Riverside County schools. *School-wide Response to Intervention model: includes intensive reading and mathematics interventions *Student Service Representatives (SSRs): provide extra assistance to students at risk of dropping out, seek to locate and re-enroll youth who have already dropped out of school. *RCO's comprehensive dropout re-	"The Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) will enhance and expand its R3ISE initiative to reduce the dropout rate and re-engage dropouts at Coachella Valley High School, La Familia Continuation High School, and RCOE's 14 community school sites."	Local community colleges and the Departments of Social Services, Mental Health, and Probation.

			entry program, Come Back Kids, will be expanded to serve a greater number of students.		
Colorado Department of Education	Judith Martinez Phone: (303) 866-6125	CO	*Intensive assistance to develop and implement early warning systems *Implement research-based best practices *Strengthen community collaboration *Comprehensive dropout prevention and recovery strategy. All schools will participate in local and statewide trainings and receive technical assistance in data collection and analysis.	"The Colorado Department of Education will provide technical assistance and support in implementing comprehensive dropout prevention and recovery activities to 30 high schools located in Adams, Denver, El Paso, Montezuma, Pueblo, Sedgwick, and Weld Counties."	Governor's Office, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the Colorado Department of Labor, Youth for a Change, the Colorado Children's Campaign, and the Colorado League of Charter Schools.
Hartford School District	Christina Kishimoto Phone: (860) 695-8860	CT	*Credit recovery at an accelerated pace through small-group instruction and online coursework. *Paid and unpaid internships *Work readiness classes *Communications initiative that include public service advertisements, posters, and outreach to community organizations. *Summer bridge programs	"Hartford School District will create Student Success Centers at Hartford High School, Bulkeley High School, and Weaver High School. Staffed by graduation coaches and a team of teachers of academic core subjects, the Student Success Centers will provide off-track students and returning dropouts individualized support and academic instruction to help them stay on track to graduation."	Capital Workforce Partners, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford, the Compass Youth Collaborative, and the Village for Families and Children are among the collaborating partners.
School District of Palm Beach County, Florida	Alison Adler Phone: 561-982-0900	FL	*A graduation coach, social services facilitator, and efficacy specialist work with students at-risk of dropping and develop individualized graduation plans. *Out-of-school youth will be contacted and given support and assistance in re-enrolling in school. *All students will be given the	"The School District of Palm Beach County, through the My Grad Plan Project, will implement dropout prevention and recovery activities at Forest Hill, John I. Leonard, Palm Beach, and Boynton Beach High schools."	Palm Beach State College, Workforce Alliance, Take Stock in Children, and the Community Partnership Group.

			opportunity to enroll in the *Education 2020 Credit Recovery program *summer transition program for entering ninth grade students who are at-risk: educational services, mentoring, and counseling services. *Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)		
The School Board of Broward County, Florida	Laurel Thompson Phone: (754) 321-2490	FL	*Mentoring *Tomorrow's Leaders program *Academic coach: supports students' academic progress throughout high school, use Success Highways and College Summit's Clean Slate curricula *Monthly advisory sessions for students. *Peer mentors	"The School Board of Broward County will expand and enhance several existing dropout prevention and re-entry program components into a coordinated and consolidated program that will serve at-risk ninth graders at Boyd Anderson and Plantation High Schools."	Broward College, Ready by 21, the Jim Moran Foundation, Broward Education Foundation, and One Hundred Black Men of Broward County.
Des Moines Independent Community Schools	Bryce Amos Phone: (515) 242-7660	IA	*Early identification system: analyzes student academic and behavior data *Uses data to inform school staff of students at risk of falling off track for graduation every six weeks. *Response to Intervention teams: intervention plans and case management for the identified students. *Academic Support Labs: offer personalized instruction and opportunities for credit recovery. *Case managers: contact dropouts and their families *Re-engagement counselor: facilitates the re-enrollment of dropouts	"Des Moines Independent Community School District will use HSGI grant funds to enhance and expand its comprehensive Destination Graduation dropout prevention and school improvement initiative. Using the High-Performing High-Poverty Education Model developed by Mass Insight, the project will enhance ongoing efforts to implement comprehensive reforms in East, Hoover, Lincoln, and North High Schools, Scavo Alternative School, and McCombs and Meredith Middle Schools."	United Way of Central Iowa, Des Moines Area Community College, Gateway to College, Iowa Comprehensive Human Services, Employee and Family Resources, Iowa College Student Aid Commission, PACE Juvenile Center, and Des Moines Charter School.

Davenport Community School District	Dawn Anderson-Rascher Phone: (563) 336-3805	IA	*Data system: real time "on track for graduation" data *monitor and track student success *Coordinated outreach and referral system: for potential and returning dropouts *Three-tiered Response to address students' social, emotional, and academic needs. *Tutoring and academic support services *Mental health services available on-site.	"The Davenport Community School District will restructure and strengthen alternative education opportunities provided by Kimberley Center East."	Scott County Juvenile Court, Scott County Department of Human Services, Vera French Community Mental Health, Eastern Iowa Community College District, and the United Way 211 Information and Referral System.
Bloom Township High School District 206	Lenell Navarre Phone: (708) 359-0409	IL	*Adult advocates *School social workers, resource teachers, literacy coaches or and staff members. *Credit recovery programs: for students who have dropped out, including evening and summer programs *Operation 25: a re-entry program: offers returning students the opportunity to earn credits through individualized instruction *Job readiness classes with work-based learning.	"To reduce dropout rates and improve the graduation rates at Bloom High School and Bloom Trail High School, Bloom Township High School District (Bloom 206) will build on existing effective practices, expand successful programs, and implement new research-based programs to address gaps in services. Bloom 206 will expand its use of data to identify incoming students with histories of academic problems, truancy, and behavioral problems, and provide teachers with common planning time to review student data and identify interventions for students who are falling behind."	Aunt Martha's, Cook County Juvenile Probation Department and Bethel Community Center.
Chicago Public Schools, District #299	Molly Burke Phone: (773) 553-2937	IL	*Open until 8 p.m. to accommodate students who have work or family obligations during the school day. *Intensive outreach efforts to recent dropouts *Counseling: social workers at each site	"Chicago Public Schools (CPS) will implement Pathway to Accelerated Student Success (PASS), a comprehensive dropout prevention and reentry program that will serve two turnaround high schools, Harper High School	Father Flanagan's Boys Town, Children's Memorial Hospital, Umoja Student Development Corporation, and the Chicago Police

			*Student advocates: monitor the progress of returning students and provide ongoing, personalized support	and Marshall High School. PASS will create Acceleration Institutes at the two schools that will provide blend of small-group instruction and online coursework to help student recover credits at an accelerated pace."	Department, SGA Youth and Family Services
St. Clair County Educational Cooperative Board	Susan C. Sarfaty Phone: (618) 825-3950	IL	*Intervention and prevention strategies *Identify at-risk students at the middle school and ninth grade level *Academic coaching *Expanded opportunities for credit recovery	"The St. Clair County Educational Cooperative Board's Stay in School program is designed to reduce the number of dropouts in St. Clair County, improve attendance and graduation rates, and provide support for students to reenter high school."	St. Clair County Juvenile Justice Commission and the St. Clair County Mental Health Board.
City of Haverhill DBA Haverhill High School	Elizabeth A. Kitsos Phone: (978) 374-5700	MA	*Two dropout prevention counselors: work with at-risk students attending Haverhill's four feeder middle schools. *Tutoring, small group instruction, and classes in job skills, career exploration, and goal setting. *Haverhill High Alternative: serves students who have dropped out or who are unable to attend school during the regular school day. *Summer bridge program that will provide academic instruction to incoming ninth grade students.	"Through its Youth Engaging for Success (YES) project, Haverhill will implement four dropout prevention and recovery interventions to address the high dropout rate at Haverhill High School."	Jobs for Bay State Grads
School District of the City of Pontiac	Robert Martin Phone: (248) 451-6852	MI	*Two academic coaches: provide direct instruction to struggling middle school students *Four counselors will work with high school students *Vantage Learning's My Access writing program will be implemented at the high school	"The School District of the City of Pontiac's Strengthening the Odds for Success project will seek to reduce the dropout rate at Pontiac Middle School and Pontiac High School by strengthening academic and counseling supports for students	

			*Compass Learning's Odyssey program will be provided at both the middle and high school. *Door-to-door visits to locate dropouts and encourage them to return to school. *Dual credit opportunities for high school students will be expanded through partnerships	and increasing opportunities for students to enroll in dual credit courses."	
Board of Education of the City of St. Louis	Linda J. Riekes Phone: (314) 345-2465	MO	*Summer transition academic skill-building program *Student and Family interventions to address attendance, behavior or academic issues *Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) *AVID strategies as Cornell note-taking and group collaboration in all classrooms *College Summit's Launch Program curriculum for all 11th grade students *A+ Schools Program, which provides free college tuition at a Missouri public community college or an eligible career or technical school to students who meet certain attendance, academic and community service requirements.	"The project will provide intensive assistance and support to cohorts of entering ninth graders at each school who have been identified by middle school counselors as having the greatest risk of dropping out."	
Lincoln Public Schools	Deila Steiner Phone: (402) 436-1988	NE	*Intensive instructional interventions: math credits needed for graduation. *Social workers: develop individualized learning plans for students who are at high risk of dropping out or who are students who are reentering school after dropping out. *Community member act as mentors	"Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) will implement comprehensive approach to implementing dropout prevention and reentry services and activities at Lincoln High School, Lincoln North Star High School, and Lincoln Northeast High School."	Midwest Equity Assistance Center, HUB of Lincoln, the Child Guidance Center, the Lincoln Council on Alcoholism and Drugs, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Psychology Department

			for students *Mental health and substance abuse services *Professional development for math teachers		
Clark County School District	Tamra Rose Phone: (702)799-5272	NV	*Academic tutoring *Social workers seek out youth who have dropped out assist them in resuming their education	"Youth Experiencing Success, a comprehensive, school-based truancy diversion program at eight high schools and their largest feeder middle schools. Coordinated by social workers at each school, the project will provide counseling and other personal supports, as well as comprehensive, "wraparound" social, health, and other services, to remove barriers to students' regular attendance at school."	Clark County Eighth District Judicial Court, the Clark County School District (CCSD), Court Appointed Special Advocates, the Department of Juvenile Justice Services, and the League of Women Voters of Nevada.
Washoe County School District	Kristen McNeill Phone: (775) 348-0398	NV	*Re-Engagement Centers: locating dropouts in the community and encouraging and assisting them in returning to school. *Individualized service plans. *Graduation Specialists: work with returning students to ensure their re-engagement is successful and serve as a liaison to community agencies to secure services *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support coach	"Washoe County School District (WCSD) will phase out Washoe Middle and High Schools and replace them with a network of small, "schools-within-a-school" that will be based at three comprehensive high schools."	City of Reno, Washoe County Department of Social Services, Nevada Urban Indians, Reno Sparks Indian Colony, and Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe.
Syracuse City School District	Michael Puntschenko Phone: (315) 435-5840	NY	*Focus on students who are chronically absent or who have dropped out *Create individualized graduation plans. *Create mentorships *Alternative options to earn credits including a virtual school program	"Syracuse City School District will implement several dropout prevention and recovery activities at the district's four high schools (Corcoran, Fowler, Henninger, and Nottingham) and fourteen feeder middle schools."	

			*Professional development for teachers		
School District 1J Multnomah County	Susan Jordan Phone: 503-916-3447	OR	*Early intervention strategy to better match supplementary services to students who have been identified as being at greatest risk of dropping out. *Intensive after-school program for at-risk middle school students: academic skill building and guidance in developing social and life skills. *Ninth grade transition support program	"Serving students attending Marshall and Roosevelt High Schools and their nine feeder middle schools, School District 1J Multnomah County's Partnership for Graduation project will implement early intervention, prevention, and reentry supports to help students get on track and stay on track to achieve high school graduation."	Camp Fire USA Portland Metro Council
Salem-Keizer School District 24J	Kelly Carlisle Phone: (503) 399-2636	OR	*Early identification of at-risk youth *Mentoring *Tutoring *Extended learning time *Credit recovery opportunities	"The Salem-Keizer Prevention, Intervention, and Reentry Initiative will implement comprehensive prevention and recovery strategies to reduce the dropout rate at Early College and Roberts High Schools"	Chemeketa Community College, the Marion County Children and Families Department, Salem-Keizer Education Foundation, Northwest Human Services, Catholic Community Services, and the Salem Chamber of Commerce.
Allentown City School District	John Clark Phone: (484) 765-4163	PA	*120-hour summer transition academic skill-building program *Case managers for the first two years *Intervention for parents and students with attendance issues *Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID): Cornell note-taking and group collaboration in classrooms. *District will implement College Summit's Launch Program curriculum for all 11th grade students *Implementation of the A+ Schools	"Allentown School District (ASD) will implement a comprehensive dropout prevention and reentry initiative."	Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board (VWIB), Lehigh Community College (LCC),

			Program: provides free college tuition at a Missouri public community college or an eligible career or technical school to students who meet certain attendance, academic and community service requirements.		
San Antonio Independent School District	David Udovich Phone: (210) 554-2270	TX	*Addresses the academic needs of overage middle school students *Student Opportunities for Academic Results: intensive academic acceleration program *Innovative alternative high school program that services dropouts who have returned to school.	"San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) will use HSGI grant funds to build upon and expand its dropout prevention and recovery initiatives. The project will expand the Attendance Improvement Management (AIM) intervention that provides immediate, intensive, and personalized support and coaching to chronically truant middle and high school students. Communities in Schools (CIS) will offer its comprehensive services to overage students attending SAISD's 14 middle schools."	Girls, Inc., San Antonio Youth Centers, the City of San Antonio, and Alamo Colleges
Sunnyside School District No.201	Krauter Phone: (509) 836-8713	WA	*Dropout Early Warning and Intervention System developed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Case managers: work with at-risk students and their families to address social and health barriers *Graduation Coaches: monitor each student's academic progress and provide support and intervention *School-based mental health services *School-within-a-school that will provide returning students with close personal academic and social support	"Located in rural Yakima Valley, Sunnyside, Mabton and Mt. Adams School Districts will work together as a consortium to carry out a comprehensive dropout prevention and recovery project that will serve Sunnyside, Mabton, and Mt. Adams High Schools and their feeder middle schools."	Northwest Community Action Center, Comprehensive Mental Health, Dependency Health Services, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, and Behavioral Health Services.

			to aid them in recovering credits.		
Seattle Public Schools	Pegi McEvoy Phone: (206) 793-8993	WA	*Ninth grade transition program for vulnerable middle school students * Truancy specialists who will use the Check & Connect model to support students, monitor their attendance, and intervene early to address unexcused absences. * The American Academy, the only state-approved digital dropout recovery program	"Seattle Public Schools will implement a three-tier model of dropout prevention, truancy intervention and dropout recovery that will serve four comprehensive high schools, four alternative high schools, and their feeder middle schools."	
Granite Falls School District	360.691.7713 Fax: 360-283-4414	WA	*Increased teacher time to reduce class sizes *Additional night school classes and after school tutoring *Increase funds for student clubs, activities, and supplies. *Specialized education program based on issues such as health issues, family issues, teen pregnancy, or poverty obstacles. *Re-entry program, night school, and credit retrieval along with access to Running Start, the Sno-Isle Skills Center, or the Workforce Development Center.	"One of the main goals of the Building Bridges grant is for schools to partner with local agencies so the whole community comes together to support youth and encourage students to complete their high school education"	Local police department, fire department, the Granite Falls Community and Youth Coalitions, and the Snohomish County Health Department.
Building Bridges: *Community in Schools of Seattle * Community in Schools of Tacoma * ESD 113 * Pasco School District	http://www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/GraduationTeamEffort/BuildingBridges/default.aspx	WA	*A system that identifies students at-risk of dropping out from middle through high school and offers timely interventions. *Coaches or mentors for students. *Staff that coordinates the partners. *Retrieval or re-entry activities. *Alternative educational programming.	"The Building Bridges grant program awards grants to partnerships of schools, families, and communities to build a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system. Each partnership must include at least one school district, and shall be led by one of several specified entities. Partnerships are required to identify students at-risk of	

				dropping out of school, or who have dropped out, and provide those students with assistance and support to facilitate the continuation of their education."	