Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools During COVID-19

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Objective:

- To provide dropout prevention strategies and evidence based recommendations to teachers and all staff, that will ultimately lead students at the secondary level to graduate during the pandemic.

Think about this…

- Why do we want to lower the dropout rate?
- Is making sure students graduate from high school the same thing as making sure those students are educated and productive citizens?
- If not, which is more important?

First… some good news!! Nationwide

Then COVID-19 happened!
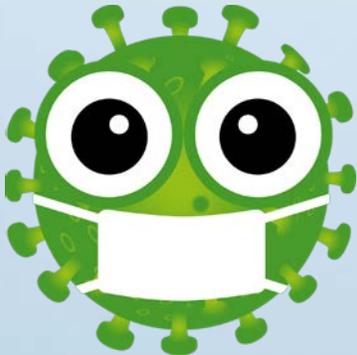
Status High School Dropout* Rates Among Youth Ages 16 to 24, by Race and Hispanic Origin:** Selected Years, 1967–2016
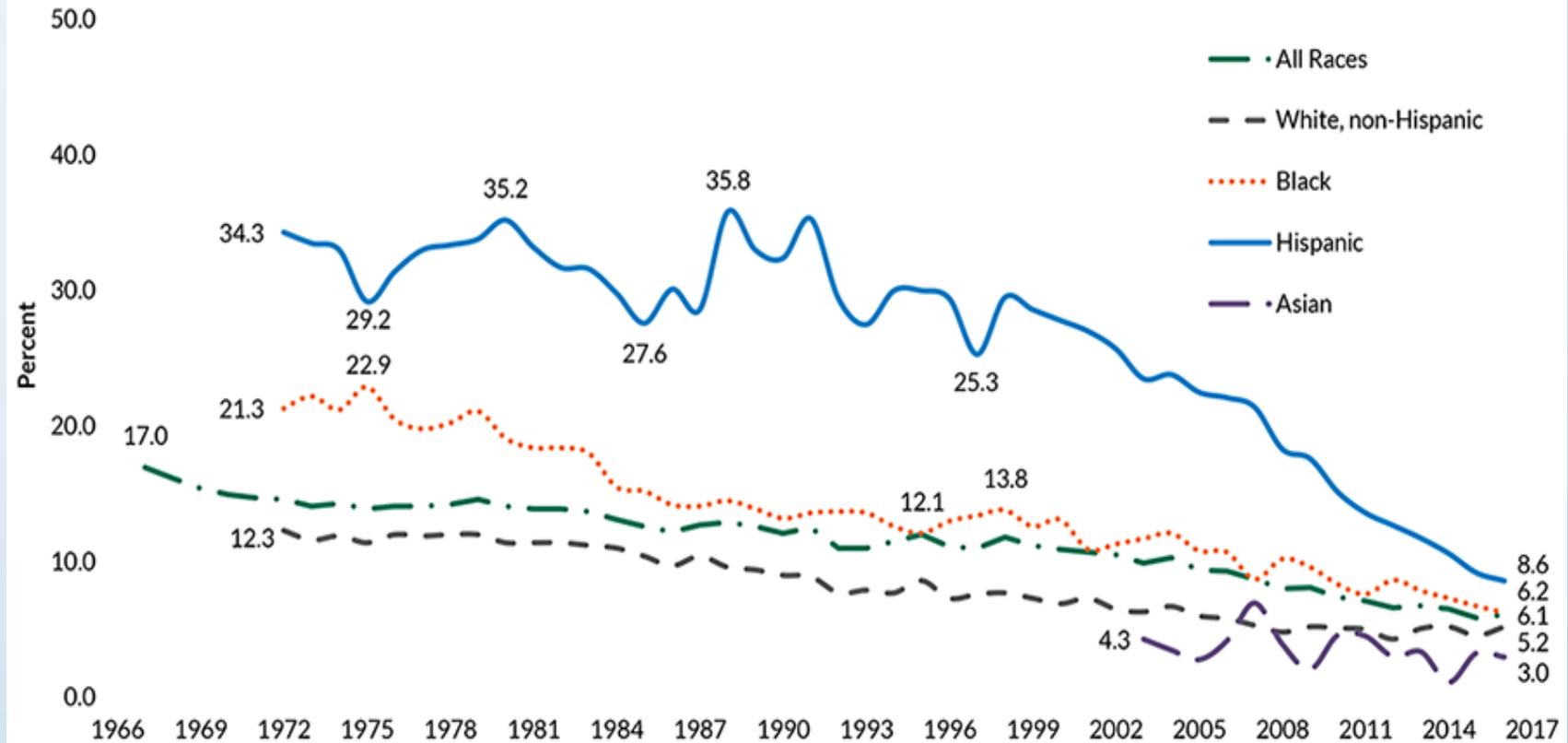
*The status dropout rate measures the percentage of young adults ages 16 to 24 who were not enrolled in school and had not received a high school diploma or obtained a GED. This measure excludes people in the military and those who are incarcerated, but includes immigrants who never attended U.S. schools.

**Due to changes in race categories, estimates from 2003 are not strictly comparable to estimates from 2002 and before. After 2001, the black race category includes Hispanics.

Source: Child Trends' calculations using U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *School enrollment in the United States: October - detailed tables* [Table 1]. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/topics/education/school-enrollment/data/tables.html.

childtrends.org

Facts:

• Texas is failing to graduate one **out of every four students** – which translates to losing 11 students per hour. The statewide attrition rate is 24 percent (down from 25 percent last year).

• Texas high schools **lost 99,960 students** in 2016-17.

• At this rate, Texas will not reach universal high school education for **another two decades in 2037**.

• Black and Hispanic students are about **two times more likely** to leave school without graduating with a diploma than White students.

Facts continued…

- English Learners are among the most likely to drop out. They are the fastest growing segment of students, but they are one of the lowest academically performing, and the achievement gap widens as students progress through school.

- Texas is significantly underfunding EL education and only two of five teachers of ELs are fully certified.

- Only one out of 10 ELs is prepared to go to college.

IT DOESNT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY!

Exceptional time and Unprecedented Situations

1. With high school graduation rates up and dropout rates down over the past decade, there is a concern that the pandemic could hurt this progress.

2. It is exposing **inequities**. (poverty, hardship, stress)

3. Life happens: pregnancies, legal problems, work to support families.

4. Not all students have **internet access** or a **quiet space** to study.

5. Some aren't having their **basic needs met**. This is a setup for not doing well in school or being on a pathway forward in any direction.

6. Some families are **struggling** in terms of **unemployment** and **food insecurity**, hampering students' **willingness** and **ability** to learn and to succeed in school.

7. Grades may not be **accurate** since being lenient or flexible can alter results.

8. There are **limited** opportunities for **social interaction** with peers and teachers.

9. **Learning requirements**, not just for would-be dropouts but for all students, are being **diluted.** So even if a student graduates this year, under present conditions they'll have **reduced** learning.

Two areas that need attention:

- **Academic Support**:

This is where dropout prevention steps really step up. Students who struggle academically might need individual help or tutoring to master the material. These kids really need to have incentives and support to improve their grades.

- **Social-Emotional Support (Affective Domain)**

Having somebody who cares about them, having a human connection; somebody who is in contact with them frequently, and is encouraging and supportive. We know that having a sense of belonging is key for succeeding in school. It's really hard to make up the kind of personal and social aspects of the learning environment in a distance learning situation.

Failing to Succeed:

- For some students, initial failure is the result of poor academic preparation. For others, it is rooted in unmet social-emotional needs.

- Most students persist in school for years, only dropping out after they fall so far behind that success seems impossible or they are worn down by repeated failure.

Recommendation 1

- Monitor the progress of all students, and proactively intervene when students show **early signs** of attendance, behavior, or academic problems.

- *Students typically decide to drop out of school after an accumulation of setbacks and struggles over several years. Three **key** indicators:*

  1. ***a**ttendance*
  2. ***b**ehavior*
  3. ***c**ourse performance*

	Traditional "during school" metrics	Potentially parallel "during COVID" metrics
Attendance	Excused absences (school days) Unexcused absences (school days)	Not attending virtual school/learning activities Not accessing available learning materials (online or packets) Not participating in or nonresponsive to school's efforts to contact or other outreach efforts
Behavior	Suspensions (in school) Suspensions (out of school) Office referrals	Concerning behavior during virtual classes Inappropriate activity in online chats/polls Documented/known incidents of stress or trauma
Course Performance	Cumulative GPA Missed class assignments Test failures Number of Ds and Fs on assignments	Turning in poor-quality assignments Not turning in assignments Failing classes needed to graduate

Steps to carry out recommendation:

KNOW YOUR STUDENTS by using school data systems. Keep a record and regularly update it as part of everyday operations.

Organize data so that it is easy for you to flag which students are showing **early warning signs** of falling off track. Ex. missing classes, behavior problems, failing.

Examine ABC indicators to identify patterns and trends that might be related to dropping out.

Databases:

- Skyward:

Progress reports, current grades, grade history, attendance, attendance history

LEP, SP. Ed., Migrant, Health Issues, Online or In Class, Blended Academy

- DMAC (Assessment information, special pops)
- Cumulative Folder

Recommendation 2

Provide intensive, individualized support to students who have fallen off track and face significant challenges to succeed.

Steps to carry out the recommendation:

For each student identified as needing individualized support, assign a single person to be the student's primary voice.

Advocates should have time, energy, willingness, acceptance of students, and believe in students ability to succeed.

SUPPORT STAFF:

1. Counselors
2. Campus Strategist
3. Parental Aides
4. District Bilingual Parental Liaison (Alma Ruiz)
5. Attendance Clerks
6. Content Mastery Teachers (if available)
7. Teachers that share the same student.

Build strong relationships, develop and monitor success plans, attendance, provide counseling, link students to appropriate resources.

Student Engagement:

- **Student engagement** refers to a student's sense of belonging, safety, and involvement in school that leads to academic achievement, regular school attendance, and graduation.

- **Communication** and **positive relationships** among teachers, counselors, and families is **essential** to keeping students engaged.

- Examples: Google Meet, Google Hangout, emails, phone calls, zoom meetings and text messages.

- Focus on making every student a **succeed** in **reading** and **math**.

Strategies to promote student engagement during remote learning:

- Creative **innovative** and **meaningful** approaches to motivate student participation:

Theme-based instruction organized around sports, arts, current events, pop culture, career exploration, or anything that sparks student interest.

Have students write and share pandemic-inspired poetry.

Invite mystery guest speakers to join class sessions and provide clues to their identity leading up to a big reveal when you meet online.

Use rewards for participation and turning in assignments.

Learning experiences should look less like…	Learning experiences should look more like…
An attempt to recreate school at home during learning:	**Flexible goals and structures for learning**
• assuming a strict **"school day" schedule**	• **extended time** for learning and reflection
• **requiring special materials** (e.g. materials not commonly found at home)	• **use of commonly available materials**
• pacing with the **planned scope and sequence in remote learning environment**	• **purposeful selection of learning targets**
• assigning **readings** to stay "caught up"	• allowing students to **explore their interests**
• packet of **worksheets and busy-work**	• **meaningful, manageable tasks and projects**
• all learning experiences happen **virtually**	• **opportunities to learn without the use of devices or the internet**

Learning experiences should look less like…	Learning experiences should look more like…
Teacher-centered instruction	**Purposeful teacher-student interactions**
• virtual lectures/classes that all students **synchronously** attend	• **optional** opportunities to connect with teachers and peers **virtually and at a variety of times**
• teachers **delivering information and assignments**	• teachers providing **coaching, feedback, and encouragement**
• teacher instruction and feedback as the **primary mode** of facilitating learning	• encouraging **students to engage in learning and reflection with their families and communities**; encouraging **self-reflection** on what students learn and how they learn it

Learning experiences should look less like…	Learning experiences should look more like…
Assignments to "get through" content	**Assignments that promote authentic learning**
• **emphasizing memorizing content** or "checking off" tasks on lists	• **connecting experiences to household activities,** like cooking, fixing things, or gardening, community interactions
• asking students to **complete tasks that are irrelevant, lack authenticity, or are redundant in nature** (e.g., "busy work")	• asking students to **identify relevant problems** in their lives and **leverage content knowledge** to address them
• trying to cover content through a volume of activities or skipping from topic to topic	• allowing students to **deeply explore concepts, topics, phenomena (science), and/or problems of interest** through investigation, analysis, research, and other sense-making strategies to build understanding and practice over time
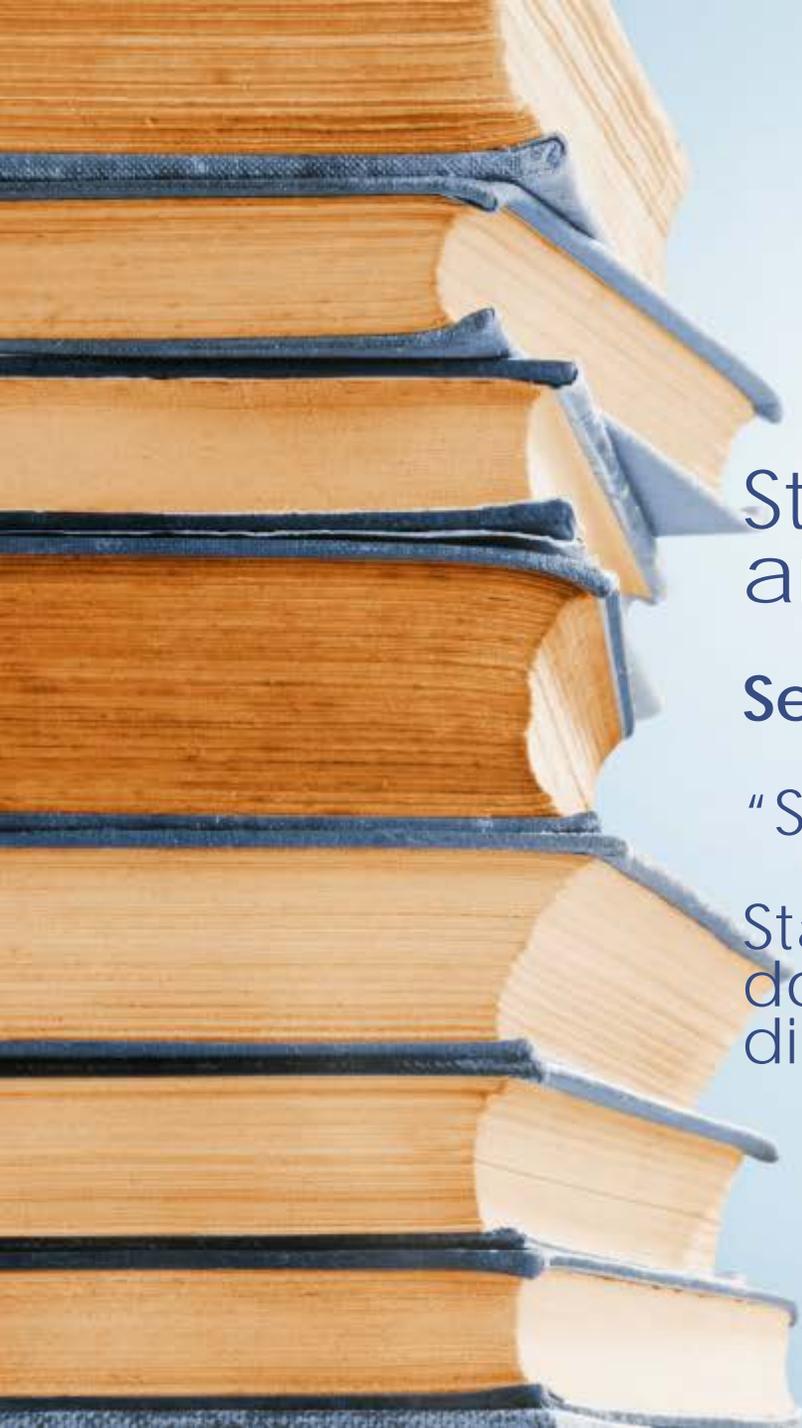
Recommendation 3

Students Need to Know They Matter, They are Missed and Support is Available.

Send the message out:

"Stick with School"

Stay home, stay in school, continue your studies, and don't back off from the goal of a high school diploma.

Steps to carry out the recommendation:

- **Send personalized texts or make personal calls to ask:**

How are you doing?

How is your family adjusting?

What can we do to help?

Are there home responsibilities that are interfering with your learning?

Use creative, informal modes of outreach:

Students who struggle in school may have difficulty dealing with traditional models of schooling.

Consider:

Dropping off a care package with a personal note with an invitation to connect.

Using social media to communicate with students (venue in which they are comfortable)

When calling them, be prepared to suggest topics that will interest them.

Support Students

- **Identify & Express Emotions.** Provide students of all ages with the language to identify how they feel and give them positive outlets to express these emotions.

- **Show Empathy.** Teach students to see life through the lens of others and to have compassion for different people's circumstances.

- **Exercise Patience.** Help students to deal with setbacks or suffering without getting angry or making decisions that will impact them negatively.

- **Serve Others.** Instill in students a belief that it is important to be a part of the solution and provide avenues for them to contribute their time and talents.

- **Be Resilient.** Encourage students to overcome life's challenges, unfairness, and unknowns and provide strategies to help them stay focused on accomplishing their goals.

Emotional Intelligence Model
Mason | Grover

Exercise Patience

Identify & Express Emotion

Show Empathy

Be Resilient

Serve Others

Keep in Mind Key Transition Years in Secondary

The Middle Grades:

Students are experiencing multiple changes in their lives. Cognitive demands from schooling become more complex.

This is perhaps the most perilous transition. It is a life changing event. Students who make unsuccessful transitions to the middle grades, rarely graduate.

For every 100 sixth-graders who fail math or English, only 11 % graduated on time.

Transition years continued…

9th Grade

Truancy is the first step to dropping out.

If students miss 10 or more of the first 30 days of school, and no one reacts to their absences, they have a good chance of failing.

If students fail 9th grade, their odds of graduating greatly diminish

High School needs to focus on building a bridge to adulthood by making lessons relevant to adult success.

Recommendation 4

Build Multiple Pathways to Success and Channel Students to the Best Option to Ensure they Reach their Goal of Graduation

Steps to carry out the recommendation:

High-quality teaching

Provide challenging, meaningful, integrated teaching and learning.

Provide access to learning opportunities outside the classroom to expand and strengthen classroom learning

Increase Rigor

According to the Gates Foundation, school systems that offer more challenging math courses in the early grades and more Advanced Placement courses in high school have reduced their dropout rates.

Link students to the best resource/option, according to their needs, that will ensure they graduate.

Options:

- CTE

- Credit Recovery

- Upgrade

- SGLC Alternative

- Blended

Technology Awareness:

- **Google**: The Google platform has many different ways to support synchronous and asynchronous learning and engagement.

- **Jamboard**: Jamboard is a collaborative digital whiteboarding experience, available through a physical board, tablet and mobile apps as well as on the web.

- **Flipgrid**: Flipgrid is a free, simple way to foster video-based discussion on classroom topics.

- **Screencastify**: Screencastify allows you to capture, edit and share videos in minutes!

- **Pear Deck**: An interactive presentation tool used to actively engage students in individual and social learning and give formative assessments.

- **Hyperdocs**: A thoughtful blend of content, pedagogy, critical thinking and creativity which is supplemented by technology.

- **Padlet**: Allows students to collaborate by posting notes and ideas on a bulletin board type platform.

- **Spotify**: A music streaming service. Can be accessed for free (with an account) and teachers can make playlists of songs. There are ads on the free version of this software.

- **YouTube**: A library of videos on (almost) every topic. Be aware of ads and review all videos before assigning them to students.

- **Podcasts:** Add diverse voices and fresh content to your lessons with free, high-quality podcasts.

Note:
No single recommendation is likely to prevent dropout entirely on its own, because each addresses different types of student needs. They are most effective when implemented simultaneously.