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## Effective Interventions for Dropout Prevention

Boredom, unchallenging class work, academic struggles, excessive absenteeism, personal issues, behavior problems, financial hardships, disinterested staff—Regardless of the reasons, students are leaving school in alarming numbers. Over 1 million students drop out each year, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings estimated in recent testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health Human Services, and Education. Also, disparities in graduation rates for the states as well as among students in various ethnic groups underscore the need to focus additional attention on reducing dropout rates.

**Table 1. Graduation Rates for U.S. Student Ethnic Groups**

All groups	70%
African American	51%
Asian	79%
Caucasian	72%
Hispanic	52%
Native American	54%

Source: Adapted from Stanley & Plucker, 2008.

The Alliance for Excellent Education reports that students in New Jersey, Iowa, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Vermont graduate at a rate of 84.8%, while those in Nevada, New Mexico, Louisiana, South Carolina, the District of Columbia, and Georgia graduate at a rate of less than 60% (Amos, 2008). In addition, the National Dropout Prevention Center states that the overall national graduation rate in 2001 was 70%, while the graduation rates for students in different ethnic groups varied greatly (Stanley & Plucker, 2008). Refer to Table 1.

Based on these statistics and federal regulatory requirements to improve achievement, it is clear that identifying effective strategies to help students stay in school, progress, and graduate



### A Note from the Director

Welcome to the latest edition of the Southeast Comprehensive Center e-Bulletin. In this issue, we focus on dropout prevention. The issue includes information from the Institute for Education Sciences related to evidence-based interventions for dropout prevention as well as updates from each of our states regarding programs and strategies they are implementing.

Each student who makes the choice to drop out of high school has a different story and reason for his or her decision. These range from a lack of interest in school to family situations that did not provide the support they needed to critical academic deficiencies that impede their success at the high school level. With all the varying reasons that students give for dropping out of high school, we know that there is no one clear answer to this problem and no single strategy that will meet the needs of all these students. In this issue, we seek to provide you information on what has been shown to work based on research and evidence and some innovative strategies being used in our states. We look forward in the future to hosting a regional summit on high school issues including dropout prevention and intervention.

I hope that this edition of our e-Bulletin will be helpful and informative for you in your work with your state, districts, and schools. If we can be of any assistance to you in this area or any other issue related to improving student achievement or meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, please feel free to contact your state liaison or me.

We are pleased at SEDL to provide the services of the Southeast Comprehensive Center and look forward to our continuing work with all of you.

Sincerely,

**Robin Jarvis, PhD**  
Director, SECC

are key issues facing many states and communities. To help address these issues, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) offers several resources that focus on dropout prevention interventions. The first publication is a *Dropout Prevention Topic Report*, released September 2008 by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). The second is a practice guide on dropout prevention, which provides research-based information on planning and implementing dropout prevention initiatives. Below is a summary of major takeaways from both publications as well as a list of additional resources.

## Review Findings—Studies of Dropout Prevention Interventions

IES What Works Clearinghouse. (2008). *WWC topic report: Dropout prevention*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved November 3, 2008, from [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/do\\_tr\\_09\\_23\\_08.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/do_tr_09_23_08.pdf)

IES What Works Clearinghouse. (2008). *WWC topic report: Dropout prevention. Technical appendices*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved November 3, 2008, from [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/do\\_app\\_09\\_23\\_08.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/do_app_09_23_08.pdf)

In this topic report, the WWC identified 84 studies of 22 dropout prevention interventions, which provided a combination of activities—counseling, monitoring, curriculum redesign, school restructuring, financial incentives, and community services—to diminish factors that may impede academic success. WWC reviewed each of the interventions on three domain outcomes 1) staying in school, 2) progressing in school, and 3) completing school (see Figure 3). Of the 84 studies, 23 studies of 16 interventions met WWC evidence standards, while 6 other interventions had no studies that met WWC eligibility or evidence screens.

Based on the WWC review of the 23 studies, 11 dropout prevention interventions were found to have positive or potentially positive effects in two domains, staying in school and progressing in school. In addition, eight other interventions had potentially positive effects in one domain, and four others had no discernible effects in any of the three domains.

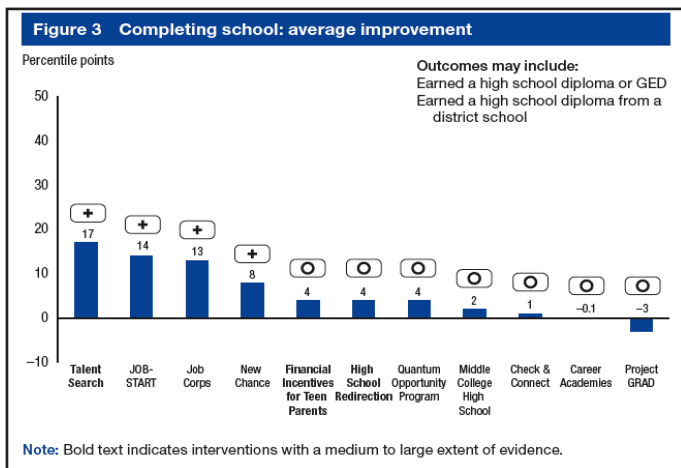
For more information on the dropout prevention interventions reviewed by WWC, refer to the Technical Appendices to the topic report (see link above). The appendices provide details on the extent of evidence, characteristics of the interventions, a summary of the findings, the methodology used, and references.

## Evidence-based Recommendations for Reducing Dropout Rates

Dynarski, M., Clarke, L., Cobb, B., Finn, J., Rumberger, R., & Smink, J. (2008). *Dropout prevention: A practice guide* (NCEE 2008-4025). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved October 6, 2008, from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>

For this practice guide, a panel of six experts examined 21 research studies on dropout prevention interventions that met WWC evidence standards or met the standards with reservations. Based on a review of the studies, the panel identified key components of each intervention and identified features that were common to multiple interventions. The panel then developed six recommendations for reducing dropout rates and determined the level of evidence for each recommendation by considering the effects of the intervention as indicated by WWC evidence standards (strong, moderate, and low characterizations), the intensity of each component toward the impacts found in the evaluation, and the number of studies conducted of the intervention.

In addition to the recommendations, the panel provided a description of how each recommendation can be implemented as well as suggestions for handling potential roadblocks. The recommendations are divided into three categories 1) diagnostic processes for determining student-level and schoolwide dropout problems, 2) targeted interventions for a subgroup of middle and high school students who are identified as at risk of dropping out, and 3) schoolwide reforms that are designed to improve engagement for all students and prevent dropping out. The first recommendation focuses on using data to diagnosis the number of students who are at risk of dropping out and emphasizes increasing student engagement. Recommendations two, three, and four suggest intensively intervening in the academic, social, and personal lives of at-risk students. Lastly, recommendations five and six focus on comprehensive, schoolwide reform strategies that are aimed at increasing engagement of all



Source: Figure 3 reprinted from *WWC Topic Report: Dropout Prevention, Technical Appendices*.

students. Refer to Table 2 for detailed information. Based on its review of the selected research studies, the panel found that the following dropout prevention interventions showed positive or potentially positive impacts: Achievement for Latinos with Academic Success, Career Academies, Check and Connect, High School Redirection, Talent Development, Talent Search, and Twelve Together. For detailed information on these interventions, refer to Appendix D. Technical Information on the Studies of the IES practice guide.

<b>Table 2. Dropout Prevention Recommendations, Levels of Evidence, and Checklists</b>		
<b>1. Use data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Use longitudinal, student-level data to get an accurate read of graduation and dropout rates <input type="checkbox"/> Review student-level data to identify at-risk students before key academic transitions	<input type="checkbox"/> Use data to identify incoming students with histories of academic difficulties, truancy, behavioral problems, and retentions <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor students' sense of engagement and belonging in school	<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor the academic and social performance of all students <input type="checkbox"/> Collect and document accurate information on student withdrawals
<b>2. Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose adults who are committed to investing in students' personal and academic success, keep caseloads low, and purposefully match students with adult advocates	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a regular time in the school day or week for students to meet with the adult	<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with adult advocates about various obstacles students may face and provide guidance and training on how to work with students, parents, or school staff to address problems
<b>3. Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide individual or small group support in test-taking skills, study skills, or targeted subject areas such as reading, writing, or mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide extra study time and additional academic support to help students master content and during the transition from middle to high school	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for credit recovery and accumulation through after school or summer enrichment programs
<b>4. Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Use adult advocates or other engaged adults to help students set attainable academic and behavioral goals with specific benchmarks	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognize student accomplishments <input type="checkbox"/> Teach strategies to improve problem-solving and decision-making skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish partnerships with community-based program providers and other agencies such as social services, welfare, mental health, and law enforcement
<b>5. Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish small learning communities <input type="checkbox"/> Establish team teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> Create smaller classes <input type="checkbox"/> Create extended time in classroom through changes to the school schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage student participation in extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, field trips, and guest speakers
<b>6. Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and succeed after they leave school.</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide teachers with ongoing ways to expand their knowledge and improve their skills <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate academic content with career and skill-based themes through career academies or multiple pathways models	<input type="checkbox"/> Host career days and offer opportunities for work-related experiences and visits to postsecondary campuses <input type="checkbox"/> Provide students with extra assistance and information about the demands of college	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner with local businesses to provide opportunities for work-related experience, such as internships, simulated job interviews, or long-term employment
Source: Compiled from <i>Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide</i> , National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, IES.		

## Additional Resources

- Amos, J. (2008). *Dropouts, diplomas, and dollars: U.S. high schools and the nation's economy*. Alliance for Excellent Education. Retrieved November 3, 2008, from <http://www.all4ed.org/files/Econ2008.pdf>
- Balfanz, R., Fox, J., Bridgeland, J., & McNaught, M. (2008). *Grad nation: A guidebook to help communities tackle the dropout crisis*. America's Promise Alliance. Retrieved November 3, 2008, from [http://www.americaspromise.org/uploadedFiles/AmericasPromiseAlliance/Dropout\\_Crisis/Graduation\\_Nation/GradNation\\_Guidebook\\_11-08.pdf](http://www.americaspromise.org/uploadedFiles/AmericasPromiseAlliance/Dropout_Crisis/Graduation_Nation/GradNation_Guidebook_11-08.pdf)
- Kennerly, L., & Monrad, M. (2007). *Approaches to dropout prevention: Heeding early warning signs with appropriate interventions*. National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research. Retrieved November 3, 2008, from [http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC\\_ApproachesToDropoutPrevention.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_ApproachesToDropoutPrevention.pdf)
- Monrad, M. (2007). *High school dropout: A quick stats fact sheet*. National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research. Retrieved November 3, 2008, from [http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC\\_DropoutFactSheet.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_DropoutFactSheet.pdf)
- National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. *Effective strategies for dropout prevention*. Retrieved October 7, 2008, from <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/default.htm>
- Shannon, S., & Bylsma, P. (2003). *Helping students finish school: Why students drop out and how to help them graduate*. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympia, WA. Retrieved October 7, 2008, <http://www.k12.wa.us/research/pubdocs/pdf/dropoutreport2003.pdf>
- Stanley, K., & Plucker, J. (2008). *Education policy brief: Improving high school graduation rates*. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, Indiana University Bloomington. Retrieved November 3, 2008, [http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/PB\\_V6N7\\_Summer\\_2008\\_EPB.pdf](http://ceep.indiana.edu/projects/PDF/PB_V6N7_Summer_2008_EPB.pdf)



## State Highlights and Events

### Alabama

#### Dropout Prevention Initiatives Target Issues and Provide Options

*Provided By Kay Warfield, Steve McAliley, and Ginger Montgomery, Alabama State Department of Education  
Mary Lou Meadows, SECC State Liaison*

Nearly 12,300 students in Alabama did not graduate with their peers according to a 2007 article in the *Montgomery Advertiser*. Also, the state has a 65% average freshman graduation rate—10% below the national rate, based on recent U.S. Education Department statistics. In the past 15 months, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) has implemented a number of initiatives to address the causes and consequences of students not receiving a high school diploma.

#### InsideOut Shows Tragic Results of Decision to Drop Out

To communicate the potential consequences of dropping out, Alabama Governor Bob Riley declared September 17, 2007, as InsideOut/Dropout Awareness Day. As a result of this initiative, all schools in Alabama have viewed the documentary *InsideOut*. This 52-minute film features prison inmates expressing regret over one choice—the decision to drop out. Prisoners talk candidly about things that attracted them to life outside of school, such as the desire for fast cars and fashionable clothes. Many acknowledge that forfeiting their education to acquire these things only resulted in a life-long residence in prison. As part of this ongoing initiative, schools in Alabama may request a visit by the Choice Bus, which houses a replica of a real jail cell and a learning environment that expands on the message of *InsideOut*—making the right choice to stay in school. For more information, visit [www.mattiestewart.org](http://www.mattiestewart.org)

#### Alabama's Tools and Programs Focus on Reducing Dropout Rates

**Credit Recovery Program.** The new Credit Recovery Program provides students who have been unsuccessful in attaining mastery of content or skills required to receive course credit an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge in segments of a course without having to retake the whole course.

**Credit Advancement Program.** This program provides students in-school and out-of-school educational opportunities to fulfill course requirements. For example, a student can opt to test out of a course, such as Algebra I, with the approval of his parent (or guardian), the teacher, and the principal. Upon receiving a passing test score, the student can choose to take another course.

**Guidance and Support Services.** The ALSDE prevention and support services section coordinates two state-awarded competitive grants for additional support to students. One grant provides graduation coaches/dropout prevention advisors (grades 9–12) for 25 select schools to work with students and focus on 1) identifying students at risk of dropping out, 2) developing school-wide support to guide students in meeting graduation requirements, 3) establishing family and community relationships to ensure overall success of students, 4) creating transitional programs and vertical teams, 5) evaluating effectiveness of strategies, and 6) reporting results. Based on the positive impact of this initiative, additional school systems have employed graduation coaches/dropout prevention advisors that were trained by the department. The other grant funds Preparing Alabama Students for Success (PASS), an early intervention program targeted to at-risk students in grades 6–12. PASS addresses factors in the areas of discipline, safety, academics, and attendance, which may result in students dropping out.

**Alabama Student Assistance Plan.** The Alabama Student Assistance Plan (ASAP) is a consolidation of the department's State-At-Risk, Children First, and Governor's High Hopes programs. ASAP provides academic and behavioral services for students at risk for school failure. As part of ASAP, last year nearly 200 tutors participated in a 2-day best practices for strategic tutoring session conducted in three regions of the state.

**Efforts to Enhance Learning Environment.** A safe learning environment is crucial to increasing academic success for all students, particularly those at risk for dropping out. Consequently, the ALSDE has strengthened several special programs to address issues such as cyber bullying, attendance, culture/climate, and alternative education programs, which may affect a student's decisions to remain in school.

### Alabama Dropout Prevention Summit To Highlight Issues and Showcase Best Practices

On March 5, 2009, the state of Alabama, along with America's Promise Alliance, is sponsoring a summit to highlight the number of students in Alabama's schools that drop out annually, factors that affect their decision to drop out, and how this decision impacts their lives as well as their communities. The summit also will showcase best practices from dropout prevention programs throughout the state. To learn more about the summit, contact Jessica Fair, community outreach coordinator, Governor's Office of Faith and Community Initiatives, at [Jessica.Fair@ServeAlabama.gov](mailto:Jessica.Fair@ServeAlabama.gov) or 334-467-6964.

For more information on Alabama's dropout prevention initiatives and programs, contact Sue Adams, director, prevention and support services, at [sadams@alsde](mailto:sadams@alsde).

## Georgia

### Initiatives and Programs Identify and Support At-risk Students

*Provided By Jessica Broome, Georgia Department of Education  
Glenda Copeland, SECC State Liaison*

As a primary strategy for targeting the specific needs of at-risk students, the state of Georgia has implemented the Graduation Coach Initiative, a unique program designed to identify and support at-risk students by keeping them on track academically and preventing them from dropping out of school. The Georgia Department of Education (GDE) has allocated funding for a graduation coach in each of its middle and high schools and provides professional development and support for each coach through a collaborative effort with Communities In Schools of Georgia. To meet the various individual and collective needs of a school's at-risk populations, the initiative focuses on coordinating efforts among graduation coaches, counselors, and school/community stakeholders to provide intervention strategies in the areas of attendance, academics, college and career planning, family and community involvement, and personal/social development and support. For more information on the Graduation Coach Initiative, contact Jessica Broome at [jbroomer@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:jbroomer@doe.k12.ga.us)

In addition, the GDE has alternative programming that offers a plethora of services for overage and at-risk students, including offering school districts the opportunity to choose from established programs or develop their own hybrid programs to serve their at-risk populations. The state board also has a waiver process that allows systems flexibility in the scheduling of classes. The following are some of the department's alternative programming options, which include those implemented in counties and school districts.

**Accelerated Transition Initiative (ATI).** ATI is designed to meet the needs of a population of high school age students who are currently enrolled in middle school and are at risk of dropping out of school. These students are placed in the 8th grade and are offered targeted instruction to prepare them for entering high school. Students are enrolled in one high school vocational course per term with the potential to earn four credits by the end of the year.

**Ninth-Grade Academy (POD).** The POD program targets high school age eighth graders in an effort to ease their transition into a high school environment. Using the middle school concept and a team of three teachers, instruction targets basic performance standards through incremental lessons designed to provide a strong academic base for future success. These students can earn four credits per term.

**Performance Learning Centers (PLCs).** PLCs are small, nontraditional high schools geared toward students who have

not been successful in a traditional school setting. PLCs create a business-like environment that emphasizes personal support and an intense academic program anchored by an online instructional system and project-based learning. Preparation for college and careers is the standard of success for PLCs, in which students are encouraged to actively plan their futures and take the steps necessary to make their plans a reality. Currently, Georgia houses 29 operational PLCs.

**Brooks County.** Overaged middle school students are placed in an academic alternative education setting in which they receive accelerated instruction and grading based on creation of a portfolio. High school students are provided instruction through computer-assisted delivery and grading on mastery of competency as applicable by state waivers of instruction. Additional assistance to deter dropouts has been provided through a credit recovery option at the main high school site through Georgia Virtual Schools after school and on Saturdays.

**Chatham County.** Savannah Technical College has a new initiative called Gateway to College, a national replication project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Gateway to College is a dropout recovery and prevention program for students ages 16–20 that allows them to work toward completing high school graduation requirements while earning college credit. Georgia currently houses two Gateway programs, one at Georgia Perimeter College and the other at Savannah Technical College.

**Colquitt County.** Colquitt County is implementing a project through the REACH alternative program for high school students. If a student is overage and credit deficient, he may qualify for the REACH Career Option. For the first half of each school day, participating students take vocational courses at Moultrie Technical College, leading to certification in their chosen fields. In the afternoon, students work on Odysseyware online to accrue or recover credits needed for a high school diploma. A Colquitt County teacher supervises the students' Odysseyware work and provides encouragement to keep students focused on graduation.

**Fulton County.** McClarin students complete their education in a setting that is different from the traditional high school. Study is intense and concentrated without extracurricular athletics and clubs. To complete their courses, students work in either an independent-study or a structured classroom setting. McClarin is a nontraditional open campus in which students work to overcome academic, family, physical, financial, and young parenthood situations. Classes meet Monday through Friday, and the school day consists of four periods with each class approximately one hour and thirty minutes in length. Also, students have the opportunity to participate in the Postsecondary Options Program, a collaborative effort in which a

student can earn credit toward a high school diploma at McClarin and a career program at Atlanta Technical Institute.

**Marietta City Schools.** Marietta City Schools use the Communities in Schools (CIS) Performance Learning Center (PLC) model to serve students who are 2 or more years behind academically. All fifth-year seniors are required to attend the PLC to fulfill their remaining graduation requirements, with the exception of those academic requirements that cannot be fulfilled at the PLC.

**Mitchell County.** The Mitchell Academy Center (MAC), in continuing to meet the needs of students in Mitchell County Schools, has developed three half-step programs: 6 to 8, 7 to 9, and the Eight Plus Pact (EPP) for middle school students. The goal of the programs is to provide students who have had multiple retentions the additional academic support needed to be successful. Students in these programs benefit from a low teacher-to-pupil ratio, blended curriculum, and computer-assisted instruction allowing them to complete 1½ to 2 years of instruction in 1 year to earn high school credit. Parental and student involvement are crucial to student success in any of the programs at the MAC. Parents are expected to attend parent-teacher-student conferences monthly to discuss the progress of their children.

**Muscogee County.** In addition to their core academic offerings, students who are enrolled in the Academic Success Center (ASC) in Muscogee County gain vocational training in the areas of business, construction, public safety, family/consumer science, entrepreneurship, and workplace readiness. Teachers address diverse learning styles by incorporating innovative strategies into lessons. When students enroll, they must commit to completing a minimum of 1 year at ASC. Following their initial year, students may return to their base high school or remain at ASC. Typically, approximately 60% of the students return the following year. Current enrollment in the school is 126 students.

**Rockdale County.** Rockdale County's Open Campus and Alternative Education programs have been designed to help overaged students catch up and prevent their dropping out of school. Both programs use a mixture of online classes and regular teacher-led classes to offer students optimal opportunity to earn credit. At the Alpha School, each new student from tribunals, juvenile, and other non-traditional programs is interviewed by an intake committee to develop an intervention plan with the school and support staff (counselor, psychologist, behavioral specialist, educational specialist, social worker). Also, all schools in Rockdale County use a data gathering program called Thinkgate for benchmarks designed to gather data on which students have mastered state academic standards and which students should be offered targeted intervention to ensure standard mastery.

**Wayne County.** Wayne County employs several of the credit recovery options offered by the state of Georgia, including Novanet, Plato, and Odyssey. These programs are generally purchased with Title I funds for the system. Selected teachers and staff are trained to use these programs. With credit recovery programs, each student can earn up to six credits. Additionally, the county houses a strong advisory program that is designed to identify students prior to their failing of a course. Saturday Academy also is used to coach students who have experienced trouble passing the Georgia High School Graduation Test and/or End Of Course Tests. Both parents and students are involved in the academy.

For more information on specific alternative programming options in the state of Georgia, contact Jerry Randolph at [jrandolp@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:jrandolp@doe.k12.ga.us)

## Louisiana

### Summit Empowers Community Teams to Tackle Dropout Crisis

*By Darlene Morgan Brown, SECC State Liaison*

*It's been said that every 26 seconds a student drops out of high school. That's not a problem. That is a crisis.*

The high school dropout crisis is a leading topic among educators nationwide. On October 28, 2008, the Louisiana Department of Education and America's Promise Alliance, in concert with a cast of community partners hosted the state's first dropout summit to address the dropout crisis in Louisiana. The summit entitled Louisiana's Promise: Community Teams Tackling the Dropout Problem was attended by 1,000 individuals representing law enforcement, the judicial system, community and faith-based organizations, the business community, higher education, district superintendents, state department staff, and K-12 educators from all regions of the state.

During this summit, participants were engaged by a host of excellent presenters, which included Paul Pastorek, Louisiana state superintendent of education; John Warner Smith, CEO of Education's Next Horizon; Phillip A. Rozeman, president and chairman of Education's Next Horizon; Billy Stokes, director, Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development; Reverend Jennifer Jones-Bridgett, director of People Improving Communities Through Organizing Louisiana; Richey Jackson, director of truancy, 26th Judicial District Court; and Woody Oge', site director of Avondale Operations, Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding. The topics ranged from community support systems, truancy and attendance, to early detection issues.

In addition, community teams were given state and district dropout data and a dropout prevention action-planning guide,

which was used to facilitate discussions around key issues and ways to connect high schools to the future. The teams left the summit with the beginnings of strong, data-driven action plans designed to personalize dropout prevention issues regionally. Through this summit and other initiatives, Louisiana continues to focus on its goal to change its community one child at a time.

Louisiana's dropout prevention summit was 1 of over 100 state and community dropout prevention summits that will be held by 2010. According to America's Promise Alliance, "These summits will increase awareness, encourage collaboration and facilitate action in those states and communities that want to improve their graduation rates."

## Mississippi

### Dropout Prevention Initiatives Pay Off in a Big Way

*Provided by Ed Tobia, Erin McCann, and Sylvia Pirtle, SECC Program Associates Debra Meibbaum, SECC State Liaison*

Based on recent results, dropout prevention initiatives in Mississippi are paying off for students and their communities. At a press conference last year, State Superintendent of Education Dr. Hank Bounds announced that the state had 187 more graduates in the Class of 2007 than it had in the Class of 2006. "With an average \$286,350 more earning potential over their lifetimes than high school dropouts, these students represent a \$53,547,450 return on our investment," said Dr. Bounds in a July 11, 2008, news release. "That's almost \$54 million more that will be going into Mississippi's economy."

Mississippi's journey toward these recent improvements began in 2006 when the State Board of Education set two bold goals to be reached within the next 5-7 years: 1) reduce the dropout rate by 50% and 2) reach the national average on national assessments. To meet these goals, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) created the Office of Dropout Prevention, implemented a graduation coach initiative, focused efforts on developing district and local dropout prevention plans, and instituted several other statewide initiatives. Recently, the State Board of Education revised its two original goals and added a third goal: 1) reduce the dropout rate to 13% by 2013; 2) reach the national average on national assessments by 2013; and 3) ensure that all students exit 3rd grade reading on grade level by 2020.

The SECC is working with the MDE on several key initiatives to improve graduation and dropout rates. In 2007, SECC staff members began assisting the Office of Dropout Prevention with the development of training for reviewers of district dropout prevention plans. Working with the director of the office, a representative from the National High School Center, and the Mississippi Dropout Prevention Task Force, SECC staff developed and refined a rubric and a review process for the district dropout

prevention plans. Upon completion of the rubric, the state provided support to districts that needed to further develop their original plans. SECC staff also designed a training program that was implemented in January 2008 with a follow-up session scheduled in February.

As part of these ongoing efforts, SECC staff have provided technical assistance for the development of training for graduation coaches and MDE staff on best practices for assisting school districts in implementing and revising their dropout prevention plans. The most recent training session took place in November 2008. With this training, participants plan to assist schools and districts in meeting the state's goal of reducing the dropout rate.

While acknowledging improvements in graduation and dropout rates, the MDE plans to stay on track to meet its goals with the initiatives highlighted above and other statewide dropout prevention initiatives.

- The "On the Bus" branding campaign, which included television ads, radio spots, billboards and a Web site
- Dropout Prevention Summits, including one for teens and one for education, business, and community leaders, that were held last year to identify and implement localized dropout prevention initiatives
- Business donations to 10 central Mississippi school districts to help fund their local dropout prevention plans and a custom-designed guitar from Peavey Electronics in honor of the On the Bus campaign, with proceeds from each guitar to benefit the Afterschool Alliance of Mississippi
- Redesigning Education for the 21st Century Workforce in Mississippi, which was piloted in 14 school districts in the 2007–2008 school year and will be expanded to an additional 19 school districts in the 2008–2009 school year

"The initiatives we have underway at both the state and local level are making a difference," explained Dr. Bounds. "The most significant difference will be in the lives of the boys and girls that will be saved from the life of struggle that high school dropouts suffer and given the opportunity for success that a high school diploma gives them."

## South Carolina

### Initiatives Focus on Collaboration, Resources to Address Dropout Issue

By Sandra Lindsay, SECC State Liaison

The state of South Carolina supports a number of dropout prevention initiatives and efforts, two of which include a recently held summit and ongoing services and resources provided by a national clearinghouse for dropout prevention.

## Summit Spreads Message That Graduation Matters

Strategies for reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates took center stage in South Carolina on December 2, 2008. With the assistance of America's Promise Alliance and the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, the governor's office and the state superintendent's office partnered to coordinate the Graduation Matters Dropout Prevention Leadership Summit. Corporate partners including State Farm® Insurance Companies and AT&T provided financial support to help make the summit a reality. This partnership allowed the state to focus clearly on policy implications and enabled participants to gather core information to develop strong policies at the local, state, and federal level. The summit was intended to build grassroots support for addressing the significant issue of dropouts in South Carolina's schools. Approximately half of the participants were students whose advice was sought in the development of long-term solutions.



The agenda for the summit included remarks by the governor, state superintendent, and representatives from America's Promise Alliance. General sessions and breakout sessions were designed for both the adults and students who were in attendance. The large cross section of participants extended beyond educators to parents, faith-based organizations, business and industry, government and community agencies, nonprofits, and other stakeholders that came to the table to seek solutions to the dropout problem. The 1-day meeting was held at the Columbia Metropolitan Conference Center in Columbia, South Carolina. To access materials from the summit as well as links to resources on dropout prevention, visit the South Carolina Department of Education's Web site at <https://apps.ed.sc.gov/agency/Innovation-and-Support/Dropout-Prevention-Summit/index.html>

## Center Provides Dropout Prevention Strategies, Resources, and Tools

A summary of work in South Carolina around the issue of dropout prevention would be incomplete without mention of the National Dropout Prevention Center located at Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) was established in 1986 to serve as a clearinghouse on issues related to dropout prevention and to offer strategies designed to increase the graduation rate in America's schools. The center and its many resources are helpful tools for educators and decision-makers in the southeast region and nationwide.



One noteworthy resource is the center's *Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs: a Technical Report*, a collaborative effort with Communities In Schools Inc. This report summarizes a study conducted by NDPC/N that found multiple risk factors that may increase the likelihood that students will drop out. The 282-page report also provides information on 50 exemplary programs and best practices to address dropout risk factors. Information provided on each program includes the program's name and Web site (if applicable), an overview, primary strategies and components, targeted risk factors and groups, relevant impacted risk factors, research evidence, and program contact information. To access the technical report, use this link: [http://www.dropoutprevention.org/resource/major\\_reports/communities\\_in\\_schools.htm](http://www.dropoutprevention.org/resource/major_reports/communities_in_schools.htm)

In addition to showcasing publications and tools, the NDPC/N Web site provides access to online events and conferences. On

January 13, 2009, at 3:30 p.m. Eastern Time, the center sponsored a live radio webcast entitled Solutions to the Dropout Crisis. Conferences featured on the site include an institute on dropout prevention in Clearwater, Florida (January 12–16) and a forum on at-risk youth in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina (February 15–19).

Over the years, the NDPC/N has become a well-established national resource for sharing solutions for student success. It does so through its clearinghouse function, active research projects, publications, and a variety of professional development activities. In addition, the center conducts a number of third party evaluations and Program Assessment and Reviews. To learn more about the NDPC/N, resources, or upcoming events, visit the center at the following link: <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/about/default.htm>

## Southeast Comprehensive Center e-Bulletin

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The Southeast Comprehensive Center (SECC) is one of 16 regional centers established by the U.S. Department of Education. The primary goal of the regional centers is to build the capacity of the state education agencies and statewide systems of support to implement NCLB. Links to the other regional centers, the content centers, and the U.S. Department of Education may be found on the SECC Web site ([secc.sedl.org](http://secc.sedl.org)).

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