



On behalf of the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, the Title IV, Part A Technical Assistance Center (T4PA Center) provides State education agencies (SEAs) and their State coordinators (SCs) with dedicated support for implementing the Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) program. This document details select efforts by the T4PA Center during its Base Year of operations to facilitate the achievement of program goals.

Preventing School Dropout Brief Resource Guide

The purpose of the Preventing School Dropout Brief Resource Guide is to assist state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) in reducing school dropout rates. Dropout prevention is a Student Support and Academic Enrichment allowable activity under the Safe and Healthy Students priority content area. The following resources can be applied broadly to training and technical assistance efforts to prevent student dropout.

School Dropout Statistics

According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCES), the 2017 "status dropout rate," defined as the number of youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who were neither enrolled in school nor had received a high school credential in the United States, was 5.4 percent or 2.1 million youth.¹ The status dropout rate varies by gender, with males experiencing a higher dropout rate (6.8 percent) than females (4.7 percent), and by race/ethnicity, with American Indian/Alaska Native (11.0 percent) and Hispanic (9.1 percent) youth experiencing higher dropout rates than white (4.5 percent) or Asian (2.0 percent) youth. Across gender and racial lines, institutionalized youth have the highest status dropout rate of 33.7 percent. It is important to note that several other definitions of dropout rates are also sometimes used.²

Dropout rates are highly variable across schools and areas of the country. According to the [Everyone Graduates Center](#), just 15 percent of schools account for over half of all dropouts. Furthermore, there is a concentration of high schools in northern and western cities and throughout the South and Southwest in which half or more students drop out. This dropout crisis disproportionately affects minority youth and youth in areas with low income and high rates of crime and unemployment, in addition to other structural risk factors.

To read more about trends in high school dropout rates, please review the [selected findings](#) in the NCES's *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States*. For state-level estimates, see Figure 3.7 in [this report](#).

¹U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2006 through 2017. See National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, [table 219.80](#).

²The *event* dropout rate (4.8 percent) is the percentage of students between the ages of 15 and 24 who leave school between the beginning of one school year and the beginning of the next without a high school credential. The status *completion* rate (92.9 percent) is the percentage of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 not enrolled in high school who hold a high school credential. The adjusted cohort graduation rate (84 percent) is the percentage of high school students who graduate on time with a regular diploma. Additional information on dropout rates and definitions is available from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).



Factors Contributing to School Dropout

According to a [comparative analysis](#)³ of why students drop out of high school, study authors determined that various factors influence student dropout: factors can push, pull, or make students fall out of school. For example, a student is *pushed* out of school when there is a consequence initiated by the school, such as expulsion. A student is *pulled* out of school by external factors, such as becoming pregnant or needing to support his or her family. Finally, a student *falls* out of school when the student’s connection with the school diminishes for reasons like not having a feeling of belonging at the school.

The push, pull, or fall-out factors can be grouped into three categories: school-related reasons, family-related reasons, and job-related reasons. School factors can include absenteeism, difficulty keeping up with schoolwork, suspension/expulsion, and dislike of school. Family factors that can impact school dropout include low socioeconomic status, low education level of parents, family disruption, and siblings who have dropped out of school. Job-related factors occur when the student’s employment interferes with attending school. It is important to note that over the past several decades, there has been an increase in students dropping out during the critical period of 8th-10th grades due to “push-out” factors related to in-school problem behaviors. As students enter 11th and 12th grades, disengagement and pull-out factors become more common. Thus, dropout prevention may look different for students in different grades and may require increased focus on school discipline policies in middle school.

The following table shows examples from the [National Dropout Prevention Center](#) (NDPC) for each type of dropout factor.

School-Related	Family-Related	Job-Related
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missed too many days of school Did not like school Could not keep up with schoolwork Experienced exclusionary discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was pregnant Had to support family Had to care for a family member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Got a job Could not work at the same time 

Within each of the school-, family-, or job-related factors, individual characteristics can influence school dropout rates. In [Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs: A Technical Report](#), the NDPC notes that dropping out is considered a “long process of disengagement”⁴ in which risk factors accumulate, interact, and compound over time. Individual student factors that contribute to this process can include, but are not limited to, a learning disability; early adult responsibilities; social attitudes, values, and behaviors; or school performance, engagement, or behavior. However, it is important to recognize that school and systemic risk factors also play a significant role in whether a student drops out. Thus, schools can target interventions at multiple levels and risk factors simultaneously.

³ Doll, J. J., Eslami, Z., & Walters, L. (2013). Understanding why students drop out of high school, according to their own reports: Are they pushed or pulled, or do they fall out? A comparative analysis of seven nationally representative studies. *SAGE Open*, 3(4). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/215824401350383>

⁴ Hammond, C., Linton, D., Smink, J., & Drew, S. (2007). *Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center, Communities In Schools, Inc.

Resources to Prevent School Dropout

There are many strategies schools can implement to prevent students from dropping out, including those in the following selected resources.

THE NATIONAL DROPOUT PREVENTION CENTER

The [National Dropout Prevention Center](#) (NDPC) provides resources including publications and professional development as well as conducts research and evaluation projects to identify and develop solutions to increase graduation rates. Below are three flagship resources created by the NDPC:

- **15 Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention** — The NDPC has identified 15 research-based strategies that can reduce school dropout, organized within four categories: (1) foundational strategies (school-community approaches), (2) early interventions, (3) basic core strategies, and (4) managing and improving instruction. Each strategy (listed in the box to the right) can be implemented alone, but the strategies are most effective when multiple ones are implemented together. For each strategy, the NDPC provides a corresponding [online course](#) that is 60-90 minutes in length and explains how the strategy fits within the *15 Effective Strategies* model and its research base. Participants learn about examples of successful implementation, potential challenges and benefits of each strategy, and key considerations when planning dropout prevention programs. The [Kansas State Department of Education](#) also offers resources on these effective strategies using categories similar to those of NDPC.
- **Solutions to the Dropout Crisis** — The NDPC produces this Webcast that airs on the second Tuesday of every month at 3:30 p.m. Eastern time. With more than 100 episodes, there is no shortage of information. Episodes are an hour long and cover topics related to dropout prevention efforts, including the role of positive behavioral interventions and supports, innovative approaches to engaging families and the community as an alternative to expulsion, and customizable restorative justice practices. Downloadable slides are also available for each episode.
- **Diploma Planning Institute** — The NDPC Diploma Planning Institute trains district and school administrators on how to build a foundational dropout prevention plan using proven, research-based strategies. Dropout prevention experts use local data and administrators' knowledge of their students to help school leadership develop plans that are customized to specific school needs.

15 Effective Strategies

Foundational Strategies

- Systemic Approach
- School-Community Collaboration
- Safe Learning Environments

Early Interventions

- Family Engagement
- Early Childhood Education
- Early Literacy Development

Basic Core Strategies

- Mentoring/Tutoring
- Service-Learning
- Alternative Schooling
- After-School/Out-of-School Opportunities

Managing and Improving Instruction

- Professional Development
- Active Learning
- Educational Technology
- Individualized Instruction
- Career and Technical Education

NOTE: Each strategy can be implemented alone, but they are most effective when multiple ones are implemented together.

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE

The [What Works Clearinghouse](#) (WWC) reviews existing research on different programs, products, practices, and policies in education, providing educators with the information they need to make evidence-based decisions. In 2017, WWC released the practice guide [Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools](#), which provides specific, actionable strategies; examples of how to implement the recommended practices in schools; advice on how to overcome potential obstacles; and a description of the supporting evidence. Below are the four evidence-based recommendations presented in this guide:

- Monitor the progress of all students, and proactively intervene when students show early signs of attendance, behavior, or academic problems;
- Provide intensive, individualized support to students who have fallen off track and face significant challenges to success;
- Engage students by offering curricula and programs that connect schoolwork with college and career success and that improve students' capacity to manage challenges in and out of school; and
- For schools with many at-risk students, create small, personalized communities to facilitate monitoring and support.

An [Educators' Practice Guide Summary](#) with an overview of these recommendations is also available.

EVERYONE GRADUATES CENTER

The [Everyone Graduates Center](#) at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education provides guidebooks, toolkits, resources, and other publications that teachers and administrators can use to keep students on track to graduate. The Everyone Graduates Center also has information on [state, local, and community capacity building](#) to address the dropout crisis.

The center is also part of two pro-graduation initiatives:

- [#GradNation Campaign](#) — This initiative by America's Promise Alliance, the Alliance for Excellent Education, Civic Enterprises, and the Everyone Graduates Center provides data, insight, and analysis; information about effective and promising practices; and opportunities for SEAs, LEAs, administrators, and teachers to connect and learn from one another.
- [2019 Building A Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Raising High School Graduation Rates](#) — This annual report examines both progress and challenges toward reaching the #GradNation campaign goal of a national on-time graduation rate of 90 percent.

NATIONAL STUDENT ATTENDANCE, ENGAGEMENT, AND SUCCESS CENTER

The [National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center](#) (NSAESC) is supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students. The center provides technical assistance that builds State capacity to improve student engagement and reduce chronic absenteeism. For more information, please contact nsaesc@insightpolicyresearch.com.

To request additional information on this topic, please visit the [T4PA Center website](#). You can also contact the T4PA Center at info@t4pacenter.org or call (833) 404-4845.