

# Reviews of Collections of Programs, Curricula, Practices, Policies, and Tools: Evaluated According to Evidence

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For more information, see: <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/reviews>

This collection originated as part of the Results for Kids: Resources library of The IDEA Partnership, which transferred early contents to NIRN in 2009.

## Dropout Prevention

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### **Beyond the Indicators: An Integrated School-Level Approach to Dropout Prevention**

Mid-Atlantic Equity Center, The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education, Washington DC. (2009). M. A. Maclver & D. J. Maclver.

"This report (a) summarizes the research on why students drop out of school, (b) explains the research implications for how to create an integrated dropout prevention strategy, and (c) highlights an innovative pilot project that yielded results in a matter of months. . . . It provides an integrated framework that schools and districts can use to build a foundation to prevent students from dropping out. Based on a tiered public health model, this framework provides universal and schoolwide practices designed to produce high attendance, positive behavior, and successful academic achievement for the majority of students. It includes implementing early warning systems that identify students at risk of dropping out, and tiered interventions to insure that struggling students stay on track to graduate."

[Full text -- Beyond the Indicators](#)

[Scroll down to the last title]

[Webinar -- Beyond the Indicators](#)

### **Chronic Early Absence: Providing Solutions for Increasing Achievement in the Early Grades and Preventing School Dropout**

*The Progress of Education Reform*. (2010). Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colorado.

"Nationwide, nearly 10% of kindergartners and 1st graders are chronically absent. In some communities, chronic early absence can affect 25% of all children in kindergarten through 3rd grade across an entire district. Within particular schools in the same district, chronic early absence can range from less than 1% to more than 50%. . . . This paper is based upon an analysis of longitudinal student data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K); an examination of local attendance patterns in nine school districts; and a review of relevant literature and interviews with experienced practitioners and researchers to identify promising programs and practices. . . . It addresses the following: (a) What are the impacts of chronic early absence? (b) Why has it been overlooked? (c) What contributes to chronic early absence? and (d) What can be done to reduce chronic absence in the early grades?"

[Full text – Chronic Early Absence](#)

[Select 2010 and click on the sixth title]

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### **Database of Model Programs: Dropout Prevention**

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC),  
Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. (Continuing Collection).

"The rating scale for the programs selected for the NDPC database of Model Programs is based on the evaluation literature of specific prevention, intervention, and recovery programs. The overall rating is derived from three summary dimensions of program effectiveness: (a) the number of years the program is in existence; (b) the evaluation design; and (c) the empirical evidence demonstrating the prevention or reduction of dropouts or the improvement in graduation rates and/or significant impact on dropout-related risk factors." Programs are rated according to strong evidence of effectiveness; moderate evidence; limited evidence; insufficient evidence. You can search for programs under each strategy or search by program descriptors or browse all.

[Home page -- Database of Model Programs: Dropout Prevention](#)

[Also see – Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention](#)

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### **Dropout Prevention for Students with Disabilities: A Critical Issue for State Education Agencies**

National High School Center (NHSC), American Institutes for Research, Washington DC. (2007).

"The purpose of this issue brief is to provide information and guidance to state education agencies (SEAs) regarding their accountability for IDEA 2004 legislative mandates in the area of dropout prevention for students with disabilities." Along with other information, this publication reviews the following promising programs: (a) Check and Connect; (b) Coca Cola Valued Youth Program; ((c) Achievement for Latinos Through Academic Success (ALAS); (d) Project COFFEE (Co-Operative Federation for Educational Experience); (e) APEX II (Achievement in Dropout Prevention and Excellence; and (f) Iowa Behavioral Alliance.

[Full text – Dropout Prevention for Students with Disabilities](#)

[Scroll down and click on the title]

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### **Dropout Prevention: IES Practice Guide**

Institute for Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. (2008).  
M. Dynarski (Chair), L. Clarke, B. Cobb, J. Finn, R. Rumberger, & J. Smink.

"This guide is intended to be useful to educators in high schools and middle schools, to superintendents and school boards, and to State policymakers in planning and executing dropout prevention strategies. . . . The guide includes specific recommendations and indicates the quality of the evidence that supports these recommendations. . . . The panel determined the level of evidence for each recommendation by considering the effects of the intervention as determined by the What Works Clearinghouse, the intensity of each component toward the impacts found in the evaluation, and the number of evaluations conducted for interventions that included the component." Evidence for interventions is rated as strong, moderate, or low.

[Full text -- Dropout Prevention: IES Practice Guide](#)

[Also see – Doing What Works: Dropout Prevention](#)

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### **Dropout Prevention: Publications and Resources**

What Works Clearinghouse, Institute of Education Sciences,  
U.S. Department of Education. (Continuing Collection).

“Interventions examined for dropout prevention can include services and activities such as incentives, counseling, monitoring, school restructuring, curriculum design, literacy support, or community-based services designed to mitigate factors impeding progress in school. Items reviewed are intended to improve outcomes in: (a) completing school; (b) progressing in school; and (c) staying in school. Grade/Age Range is Middle through High School. Population: All.” Publications and resources include Intervention Reports, Quick Reviews, Practice Guides, and Reference Resources.

[To access publications and resources – Dropout Prevention](#)

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### **Dropout Prevention: Research Sheds Light on the Students Most at Risk of Dropping Out – and How to Keep Students on the Graduation Track**

The Progress of Education Reform, Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colorado. (2007).

“This issue of The Progress of Education Reform summarizes the findings of five recent studies that address: (a) early (6th-grade) predictors for dropping out of school; (b) ninth-grade predictors of risk in an urban environment; (c) school characteristics linked to higher graduation rates; (d) economic benefits of several programs that positively influence high school completion rates; and (e) a synthesis of the research on dropping out and the importance of state data systems to support dropout prevention efforts.”

[Full text – Dropout Prevention](#)

[Select 2007 and click on the sixth title]

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### **Dropout Prevention Services and Programs in Public School Districts: 2010-2011**

National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. (2011).  
P. R. Carver & L. Lewis.

This report “found that during the 2010-11 school year, 76 percent of public school districts reported using academic failure to a large extent to identify students at risk of dropping out of school. . . . It provides national data about (a) how public school districts identify students at risk of dropping out, (b) programs used specifically to address the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school, (c) the use of mentors for at-risk students, and (d) efforts to encourage dropouts to return to school.”

[Full text – Dropout Prevention Services and Programs](#)

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### **Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs: A Technical Report**

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. (2007).  
C. Hammond, D. Linton, J. Smink, S. Drew.

The authors "began the search for exemplary programs with an existing matrix of evidence-based programs compiled at the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado at Boulder. Later in the search, additional sources were reviewed to ensure adequate coverage of the identified risk factors. To control for inconsistencies in rating criteria across sources, it was decided to include only those programs that: (a) were ranked in the top tier or level by at least two sources; (b) were currently in operation; (c) had no major revisions since the ranking of the program; (d) had consistent, positive evaluation outcomes; and (e) targeted K-12 school populations." Section 1 of the report reviews risk factors for dropping out and major trends in risk factor research. Section 2 explains the procedures and criteria for identifying exemplary programs, with a chart that lists the programs, followed by tables on risk factors addressed, programs by type, and related information. Appendix G shows a description of each exemplary program.

[Full text -- Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs: A Technical Report](#)

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### **Easing the Transition to High School: Research and Best Practices Designed to Support High School Learning**

National High School Center (NHSC), American Institutes for Research, Washington DC. (2007).  
L. Kennelly & M. Monrad (Eds).

"A substantial review of the research literature documents the fact that the transition into high school is marked by increased disengagement and declining motivation among students, which in turn, predict subsequent school failure and dropout. . . . This report is a rolled up version of four National High School Center products that had been previously released as individual pieces related to one of the NHSC focus themes: transitions into high school. Included in this publication are a fact sheet, policy brief, issue brief, and snapshot. These resources address the ninth grade 'bulge' --- the disproportionate rate at which ninth graders are not promoted to tenth grade on time, which is a risk factor for dropping out. Research-based best practices for ninth grade transitions are discussed, along with examples of how some states and districts are easing the transition. A snapshot of one school's efforts to support positive transitions into high school is also included.

[Full text – Easing the Transition to High School](#)

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### **Emerging Evidence on Improving High School Student Achievement and Graduation Rates: The Effects of Four Popular Improvement Programs**

National High School Center (NHSC), American Institutes for Research, Washington DC. (2006).

C. M. Herlihy & J. Quint.

Summarized from a study by MDRC, New York City.

"There is emerging evidence based on rigorous evaluations about how low-performing high schools can boost student achievement and keep students on track for graduation. This issue brief draws on findings from four studies by MDRC, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research firm, that shed light on both the nature of the problems found in low-performing high schools and on the effectiveness of promising interventions that attempt to address these problems. Specifically, these lessons are based on evaluations of four high school reform models: (a) Career Academies; (b) First Things First; (c) Project GRAD; and (d) Talent Development. . . . The research from these studies suggests that . . . students who are behind academically when they enter high schools can make better progress if they receive special supports, including special courses designed to help them acquire the content knowledge and learning skills that they miss out on in earlier grades."

[Full text -- Emerging Evidence on Improving HS Student Achievement](#)

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## **Increasing Rates of School Completion: Moving from Policy and Research to Practice -- A Manual for Policymakers, Administrators and Educators**

National Center on Secondary Education & Transition, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. (2004).  
C. A. Lehr, D. R. Johnson, C. D. Bremer, A. Cosio, & M. Thompson.

"This *Essential Tool* provides a synthesis of research-based dropout prevention and intervention and offers examples of interventions that show evidence of effectiveness. . . . This tool is intended as a base of current knowledge that can be built upon as additional interventions are implemented and empirically validated. . . . (The manual) is intended for state- and district-level education agencies to assist in developing and implementing interventions that will effectively decrease the rate of dropout and improve school completion for students with and without disabilities. The intended audience includes State education agency personnel, district superintendents, special education directors and their staff, principals, and those managing a wide range of alternative education programs. . . . This manual provides sample solutions (11 models) to the problem of dropout that have been evaluated and show evidence of success."

[Full text -- Increasing Rates of School Completion: Moving from Policy and Research to Practice -- A Manual for Policymakers](#)

[Scroll down to click for the content of each section]

[To view a summary chart of programs](#)

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## **Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from Research and Practice**

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon. (2004). J. Railsback.

"The author surveyed the last decade of research that discusses strategies or experiments to increase attendance. Although the intention was to find research that is considered 'scientifically based' by the No Child Left Behind Act, it was quickly determined that little research of that kind exists. Thus, the search was broadened to include a range of research designs -- peer-reviewed, published and unpublished, mixed quantitative and qualitative research, case studies, surveys, expert opinions, and promising practices from community-based organizations. As certain themes emerged from the research, key studies were collected to represent those themes. Research on factors that contribute to student success for students of different cultures -- especially Latino, African American, and Native American -- was also reviewed." The report covers findings on (a) attendance policies; (b) early interventions; (c) targeted interventions; and (d) strategies for increasing student engagement and personalization.

[Full text -- Increasing Student Attendance](#)

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## **Keeping Kids in School: What Research Tells Us About Preventing Dropouts**

Center for Public Education, National School Boards Association, Alexandria, Virginia. (2007).  
C. Jerald.

"This research review helps make sense of the wide range of actions a district can take to reduce dropout rates, highlighting the policies, practices, and programs that research shows are most likely to make a difference. It is organized around the major components of a comprehensive plan for raising graduation rates — the three or four things districts must do, and do well, to help significantly more

teenagers complete high school." The contents cover (a) Prediction -- Identifying potential dropouts; (b) Intervention: Helping at-risk students; (c) Prevention -- Changing the factors that schools control; (d) Recovery -- When prevention and intervention are not enough; and (e) Considerations for implementation. The paper reviews several evidence-based interventions, including Achievement for Latinos Through Academic Success (ALAS); Check & Connect; the Coca Cola Valued Youth Program; Quantum Opportunities Program; Career Academies; Talent Development High Schools.

[Full text -- Keeping Kids in School](#)

[Click at the right for the summary, references, and other information]

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## **Measuring Student Engagement in Upper Elementary Through High School: A Description of 21 Instruments**

Regional Educational Laboratory at SERVE Center, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. (2011). J. Fredricks, W. McColskey, J. Meli, B. Montrosse, J. Mordica, & K. Mooney. Distributed by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

"Researchers, educators, and policymakers are increasingly focused on student engagement as the key to addressing problems of low achievement, student boredom and alienation, and high dropout rates. The report describes the results of a literature review to identify available instruments. The 21 instruments identified are described according to what is measured, their purpose and use, and the technical information available on their psychometric properties. It describes what the studies reported in terms of reliability, validity, and uses without examining the quality of the studies themselves."

[Full text – Measuring Student Engagement](#)

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## **Programs and Policies to Assist High School Dropouts in the Transition to Adulthood**

*Future of Children*. (2010). A collaboration of The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University & The Brookings Institution. D. Bloom.

This paper "describes eleven employment-focused or education-focused programs serving high school dropouts that have been rigorously evaluated over the past thirty years. Some relied heavily on paid work experience, while others focused more on job training or education. Some programs, especially those that offered paid work opportunities, generated significant increases in employment or earnings in the short term, but none of the studies that followed participants for more than a couple of years found lasting improvements in economic outcomes. Nevertheless, the findings provide an important foundation on which to build. . . . The author concludes with recommendations for policy and research aimed at building on current efforts to expand and improve effective programs for dropouts while simultaneously developing and testing new approaches that might be more effective and strengthening local systems." Table 1 shows sample size and a summary of results for each program that is discussed in the study.

[Full text -- Programs and Policies to Assist High School Dropouts](#)

[Click on the fifth title]

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## **Reentry Programs for Out-of-School Youth with Disabilities:**

### **III. Characteristics of Reentry Programs**

National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. (2011). J. Wilkins.

“While the paucity of research in the area of reentry precludes descriptions of evidence-based programs, it is possible to describe reentry initiatives that have successfully helped out-of-school youth obtain high school diplomas and alternative credentials. This report is based on a thorough review of reentry programs operating around the country and provides an overview of the six most common characteristics of these programs, as well as specific examples of programs that illustrate these characteristics. Common barriers faced by programs and corresponding solutions are also presented. . . . An alphabetical list of each program, along with its significant program characteristics and contact information, is provided in the Appendix.”

[Full text – Reentry Programs](#)

[Click on *III.Characteristics of Reentry Programs* – and see related papers on this page]

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## **School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth**

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2009).

"The strategies and actions recommended in this publication are based on (a) the *Wingspread Declaration on School Connections* (developed at a 2003 Wingspread Conference sponsored by CDC and the Johnson Foundation) and (b) a synthesis of school connectedness and related research from the fields of education, health, psychology, and sociology. . . . Information from these sources was summarized to identify policies and practices that demonstrated an impact on students' sense of connectedness to school. In addition, recommendations were informed by the opinions of expert researchers, public health practitioners, and educators. This process identified six evidence-based strategies that could be implemented to increase students' sense of connectedness to school, along with specific actions that can be taken to implement each of the strategies."

[Full text -- School Connectedness](#)

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## **Students Graduating from High School: Proven and Promising Programs**

Promising Practices Network (PPN), RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California.  
(Continuing Collection).

“The PPN website is a unique resource that offers credible, research-based information on what works to improve the lives of children and families. . . . Programs are generally assigned either a *Proven* or a *Promising* rating, depending on whether they have met certain evidence criteria. Some programs on the PPN site are identified as ‘Other Reviewed Programs.’ These are programs that have not undergone a full review by PPN, but evidence of their effectiveness has been reviewed by one or more credible organizations that apply similar evidence criteria.”

[View Proven and Promising Programs](#)

[Also see "Promising Practices for Promoting High School Graduation": A Brief](#)

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## **The Effects of Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions on Dropout for Youth With Disabilities: A Research Synthesis**

National Dropout Prevention Center for Students With Disabilities,  
Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. (2005). B. Cobb, P. Sample, M. Alwell, & N. Johns.

"The relationship between cognitive-behavioral interventions/therapies (the intervention) and dropout outcomes and violent verbal or physical aggression (the outcomes) for secondary aged youth with disabilities was explored in this systematic review. A total of 16 studies intervening with 791 youth with behavioral disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders, and learning disabilities were reviewed. The findings of this review strongly support the efficacy of the use of cognitive-behavioral interventions across educational environments, disability types, ages, and gender in the reduction of dropout and correlates of dropout. A series of more detailed implications for practice are suggested as well as directions to the reader to locate more detailed descriptions of how these interventions might be implemented in their secondary educational environments." This report does not evaluate specific program models but, rather, seeks to verify the efficacy of interventions that are based on the cognitive behavioral approach.

[Full text -- The Effects of Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions on Dropout for Youth With Disabilities: A Research Synthesis](#)

[Click on the title in the first paragraph]

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## **Transition from Middle School to High School: NMSA Research Summary**

National Middle Schools Association (NMSA), Westerville, Ohio. (2006).

"Transition is receiving increased attention due to the fact that ninth grade course failures and high school dropout rates exceed all other grade levels. While a long history of research on the transition to college and transitions for students with disabilities exist, there is little empirical research examining the transition from middle school to high school for the general education population." This paper reports on research on this topic.

[Full text – Transition from Middle School](#)

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## **What Works? Targeted Truancy and Dropout Programs in Middle and High School**

Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Olympia, Washington. (2009).

T. Klima, M. Miller, & C. Nunlist.

The authors "conducted a national literature search for evaluations of targeted truancy or dropout programs for middle and high school students. . . . (The Institute requires) that evaluations be of sufficient scientific rigor. At a minimum, to be included in the analysis, evaluations must have a comparison group of similar youth who did not receive the intervention. . . . The 22 studies included in this analysis reviewed 34 distinct programs. . . . On the whole, (the authors) found modest but positive impact on dropping out, achievement, and presence at school. . . . Three types of programs show improvement in school outcomes: (a) alternative programs (e.g., schools within schools); (b) mentoring; and (c) behavioral programs."

[Full text -- Targeted Truancy and Dropout Programs](#)

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## **Why Students Drop Out of School: A Review of 25 Years of Research**

California Dropout Research Project, University of California, Santa Barbara. (2008).

R. Rumberger & S. A. Lim.

“This paper provides a contemporary review of the vast research literature on predictors of high school dropout and graduation. The paper first reviews the theoretical literature on student dropout and graduation, and uses it to develop a conceptual framework for reviewing the research literature. It then describes the procedures for identifying the research literature published over the last 25 years, and some of the features of that literature. Finally, it reviews the empirical literature by providing a capsule summary of all the major predictors of high school dropout and graduation. Where available, the discussion also draws on existing reviews of the literature that examine the relationship between specific predictors and dropping out.”

[Full text – Why Students Drop Out of School](#)

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