
Piloting a Searchable Database of Dropout Prevention Programs in Nine Low-Income Urban School Districts in the Northeast and Islands Region

This report details a pilot project to generate and share knowledge by building a searchable database of dropout programs and policies, including developing and field-testing a protocol for systematically collecting this information in nine midsize cities in the Northeast and Islands Region with the highest dropout rates, largest minority student populations, and most children living below the poverty line.

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PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Prepare an interactive, searchable database to catalog information on dropout prevention policies and programs.
- Develop and field-test a protocol for systematically collecting information about dropout prevention programs and policies in nine midsize cities.
- Pilot potential uses of the database for displaying information on programs and policies for dropout prevention.
- Document whether the cities have implemented evidence-based programs and policies consistent with What Works Clearinghouse findings.

METHODOLOGY

- Review of publicly available documents about dropout prevention initiatives.
- Interview key informants from multiple levels of the education system.
- Field-test the protocol and data collection tools in nine midsize cities.

AUDIENCE & APPLICATION

- Education officials at the state and district levels, principals, program directors.
- Others interested in learning what districts are doing to address dropouts.

FINAL PRODUCTS

- Issues & Answers Report published by the Institute of Education Sciences, which may be found at: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2008046.pdf
- User's Guide to Navigating the Searchable Database.
- Protocol to collect information on what districts are doing to address dropout rates.
- Searchable database of dropout prevention programs and policies, which may be found at: <http://www.relnei.org/research.educational.dropoutdb.php>.

What Are Fast-Response Projects?

Fast-Response Projects are short-term projects that respond to regional and national needs and priorities and provide research-based knowledge to inform policy and practice. They use methods such as research syntheses, mining of existing data sets, and descriptive studies.



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- Each of the nine pilot districts is currently implementing at least nine dropout prevention programs and policies.
- The core strategies most frequently used are: tutoring/extra classes (38 records), social and emotional learning curricula (37 records), and community collaboration (34 records).
- Of the nine service goals, the two most commonly targeted are: to improve academic performance and to increase school attachment.
- About 30% of the programs target students with academic needs, about 18% target students who are chronically absent or truant, and about 15% target students with behavioral needs.
- In six pilot districts, the greatest number of programs and policies targets improving academic performance. The other three districts have more programs and policies targeting increasing school attachment, decreasing truancy, and providing support during transitions.
- In four pilot districts, the greatest number of programs and policies targets subsets of students designated as at-risk because they are members of particular segments of the school population, such as pregnant teens and English language learners. In two districts, the greatest number of programs and policies targets individuals who have exhibited behaviors, such as failing grades that put them at high risk of dropping out.
- Two of the programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse are being implemented in the pilot districts, Talent Search (five districts) and Career Academies (eight).
- Several programs and policies implemented by multiple districts have not been reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse.
- Among other recommendations, the authors recommend expanding the database to monitor in the initial pilot sites in dropout prevention programs and policies and adoption of evidence-based practices and to include a greater diversity of districts within the region, especially larger cities where many students are at risk of dropping out.

Contact Information

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