

THREE STEPS TO BUILDING AN EARLY WARNING AND INTERVENTION SYSTEM FOR POTENTIAL DROPOUTS



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MOST DROPOUTS

- Are identifiable years before they dropout.
- Struggle in or disengage from school for three to four or more years before they dropout.
- Are preventable.
- Ultimately want to graduate from high school.

THREE STEPS TO REDUCING DROPOUTS

- **Step 1:** Understand the dropout problem in your community
- **Step 2:** Build an early warning, prevention and intervention system
- **Step 3:** Involve the Community

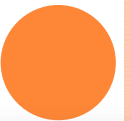
STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE DROPOUT PROBLEM IN YOUR COMMUNITY



THERE ARE 4 TYPES OF DROPOUTS

- Life Events (forces outside of school cause students to dropout).
- Fade Outs (students do ok in school but stop seeing a reason for staying).
- Push Outs (students who are or perceived to be detrimental to others in the school).
- Failing in School, Schools Failing the Student.

FIND OUT HOW MANY OF EACH TYPE OF DROPOUT
IS IN YOUR COMMUNITY
(AS EACH TYPE REQUIRES A DIFFERENT INTERVENTION)



DO A TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS OF ALL STUDENTS IN GRADES 8 TO 12 WHO WITHDREW LAST YEAR

- Among those who are not verified transfers to other schools, what percent withdrew close to graduation (1 year or less of credits shy), Two years of credits shy? Three years or more years?
- How many students in each category were over-age?

LOOK AT ATTENDANCE HISTORIES

- Among students who dropped out last year, what percent are attending school 90-100% of the time prior to dropping out (both the year of and the year prior), 80-90% of the time, 70-80% and less than 70%?
- If students are dropping out near graduation or with decent attendance prior to graduation they are most likely life events or fade outs.
- If students are dropping out with few credits earned and poor attendance prior to dropping out they are most likely failing to succeed in school.



DIG DEEPER:

ATTENDANCE SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

- Ask a 10% sample of students across grades 6-12 how many days of school they missed since the start of the year for
 - a) personal choice (did not feel like it, overslept, wanted to be with my friends, didn't complete assignment, etc.);
 - b) school environment reasons (do not feel safe in school, going to school, don't want to be teased, bullied, did not want to read out loud in class, did not want to face a teacher); and
 - c) life pull out reasons (had to work, watch a sibling, go to court).
- Conduct Attendance Interviews with students who have missed 20 or more days in the year.

LOCATE YOUR DROPOUT CRISIS

- Which high schools are producing most of the dropouts in your community?
- Which middle grade schools that feed them have low attendance and/or achievement rates?
- Are these schools helping to reduce the dropout crisis or making it worse?

ARE THE SCHOOLS

- Chaotic, anonymous, transient?
- Laconic, with low expectations?
- Allowing students to not attend or fail courses without bringing significant adult attention?



STEP 2: BUILD AN EARLY WARNING, PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION SYSTEM



OUR MAJOR FINDING

- Students in high poverty school districts who successfully navigate grades 6 to 9 by and large *graduate* from high school (75% or higher grad rates).
- Students in high poverty school districts who struggle and become disengaged in the early secondary grades and, in particular, have an unsuccessful 6th and/or 9th grade transition *do not graduate* (20% or less grad rates).

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODS

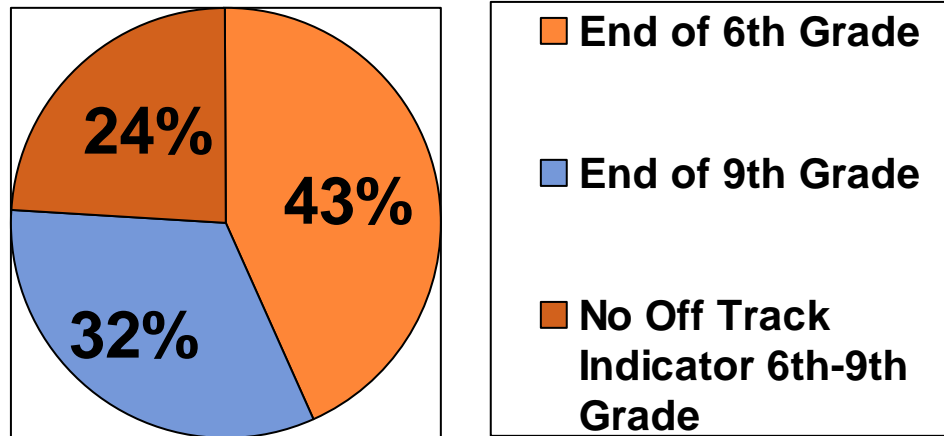
- What is the role of the early secondary grades (grades 6 to 9) in determining the likelihood that a student will graduate?
- To find out we followed cohorts of students from 6th grade through two years past expected graduation time in three large, urban, high poverty school districts.

ABOUT **40%** OF EVENTUAL DROPOUTS
COULD BE IDENTIFIED IN THE 6TH GRADE
AND **75%** BY 9TH GRADE



IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS, 75% OF EVENTUAL DROPOUTS CAN BE IDENTIFIED BETWEEN THE 6TH AND 9TH GRADE

Percent of Dropouts That Can Be Identified between the 6th and 9th grade-Boston Class of 2003



STUDENTS ARE KNOCKED OFF COURSE IN THE EARLY SECONDARY GRADE BY THE A, B, C's

Attendance

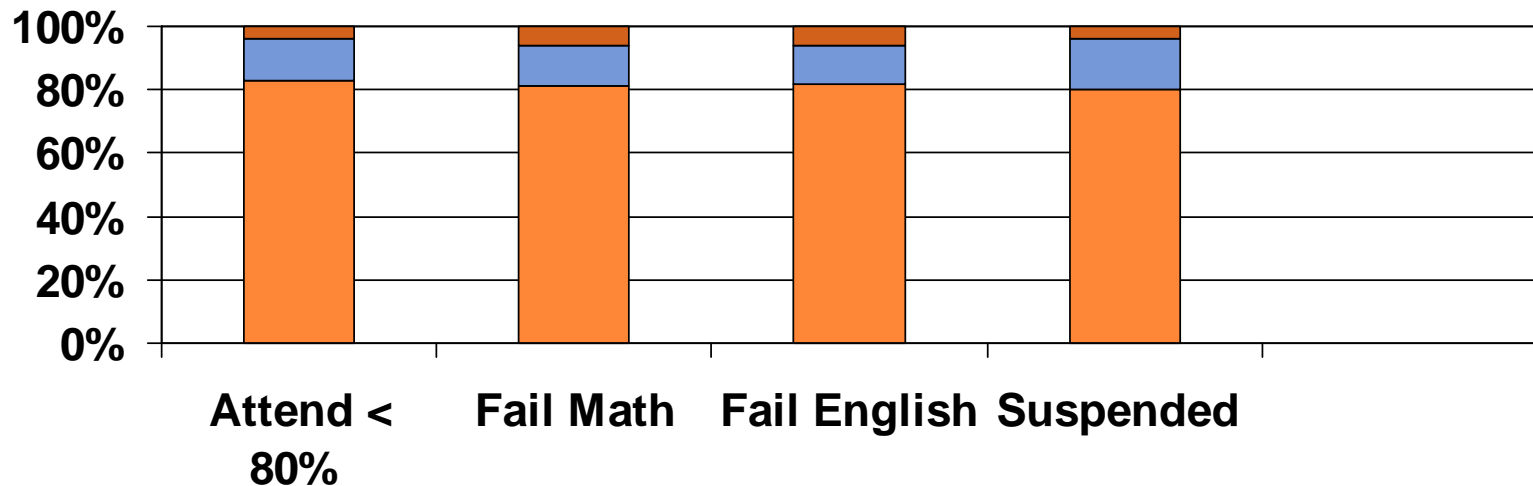
Behavior

Course Failure



6TH GRADERS WITH POOR ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR OR COURSE FAILURE HAVE EXTREMELY LOW GRADUATION RATES

Graduation Outcomes for Students with 6th Grade Off-Track Indicators-Philadelphia



Does Not Graduate

Graduates On Time

Graduates with One Extra Year



ATTENDANCE

- Across the three school districts, the critical threshold varied from attending school less than 80% of the time to attending less than 90% of the time.
- This indicates that the critical factor may not be total days missed but being in the bottom of the attendance distribution.

BEHAVIOR

- Out of School Suspensions were highly predictive.
- But so was sustained mild misbehavior (e.g. receiving a poor final behavior grade in two or more courses).
- Many more students received poor final behavior grades than were suspended - 1000's compared to 100's.

COURSE FAILURE

- Student who fail mathematics, English or any two courses in 6th grade are in trouble.
- Few students failed both math and English, but those that did almost never graduated.
- 85% of 6th graders who failed English and 75% of those who failed math in Philadelphia also received a poor final behavior mark and/or attended less than 80% of the time.
- Course Failure is a Better Predictor of Graduation Outcomes than Test Scores.



IT'S STUDENT OUTCOMES IN THE
EARLY SECONDARY GRADES IN HIGH
POVERTY ENVIRONMENTS
NOT STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
WHICH HAVE PREDICTIVE POWER

- When we control for attendance, behavior, and course performance, being over-aged for grade level, in special education, ELL or any demographic characteristic (i.e. race and gender), these are not significant or effective predictors.

WHY DO SO MANY STUDENTS FALL OF THE GRADUATION PATH IN THE EARLY SECONDARY GRADES?

We Have Underestimated The Intensity and Scale of the Educational Challenge in High Poverty Environments

THE ONSET OF ADOLESCENCE, COMBINED WITH CONCENTRATED, INTER-GENERATIONAL POVERTY, CREATES ITS OWN SET OF RISK FACTORS

- There are the developmental and cognitive challenges all middle grade schools face-magnified by the freedoms of urban environments and large numbers of students with below grade level academic skills.
- There are neighborhood challenges-gangs and criminal enterprises need young adolescent males.
- There are the family responsibilities brought on by poverty which increase with adolescence.

THESE CHALLENGES ARE MET WITH AN INADEQUATE EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE WHICH MAKES MATTERS WORSE

- There is the intense concentration of large numbers of students with emotional, social, and academic needs in a sub-set of high poverty middle and high schools.
- There is an insufficient number of skilled and intransient adults in these schools and neighborhoods committed to early secondary students' development.
- There are often poor physical facilities.

AS A RESULT, EARLY SECONDARY GRADE STUDENTS IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS BEGIN TO DISENGAGE FROM SCHOOLING IN LARGE NUMBERS AND AT A RAPIDLY ACCELERATING RATE

- Some stop attending school on a regular basis.
- Some start acting out and being disruptive in class.
- Some just stop trying and start failing their courses.

IMPACT OF ADOLESCENCE AND POVERTY ON ATTENDANCE IN BALTIMORE

High Poverty Neighborhood	Percent of Elementary Students (Grade 1-5) Missing 20+ Days	Percent of Middle Grade Students Missing 20+ Days
Clifton-Berea	15%	46%
Greenmount	15%	50%
Madison	21%	65%
Midway	6%	55%
Park Heights	17%	57%

Source: BNIA

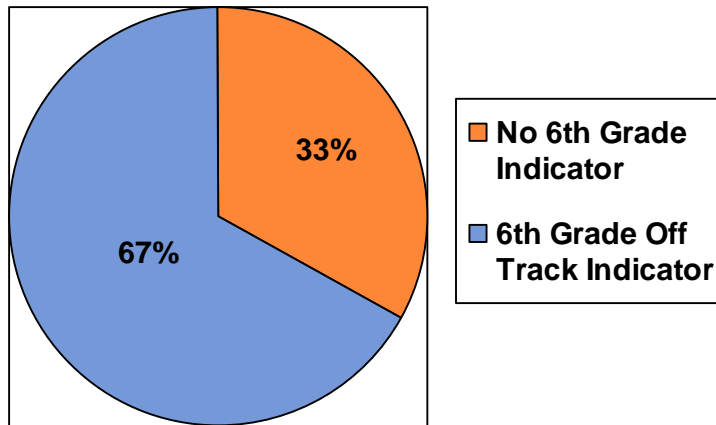


WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

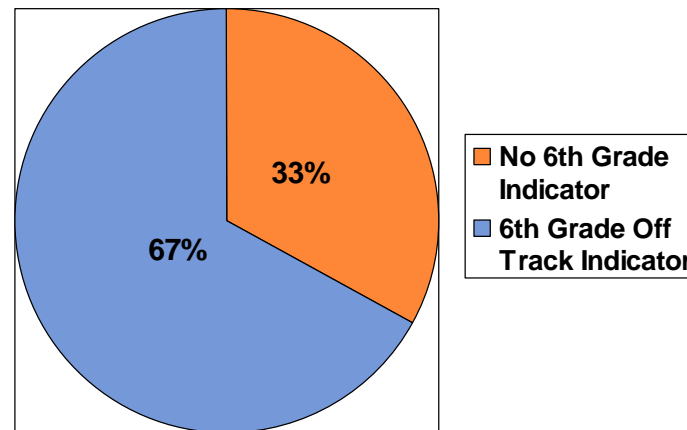
- Low Graduation Rates - 40 to 60% in Major Cities and Low Wealth Rural Districts.
- Low Achievement - Excellent instructional programs and good teachers have limited impact when students do not attend school regularly, behave, engage, and try.
- Increased Juvenile Crime and Teenage Pregnancy

SCHOOL DISENGAGEMENT PRECEDES INVOLVEMENT WITH THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Males Incarcerated in High School-Philadelphia



Females Who Give Birth in High School-Philadelphia





WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

In Practice

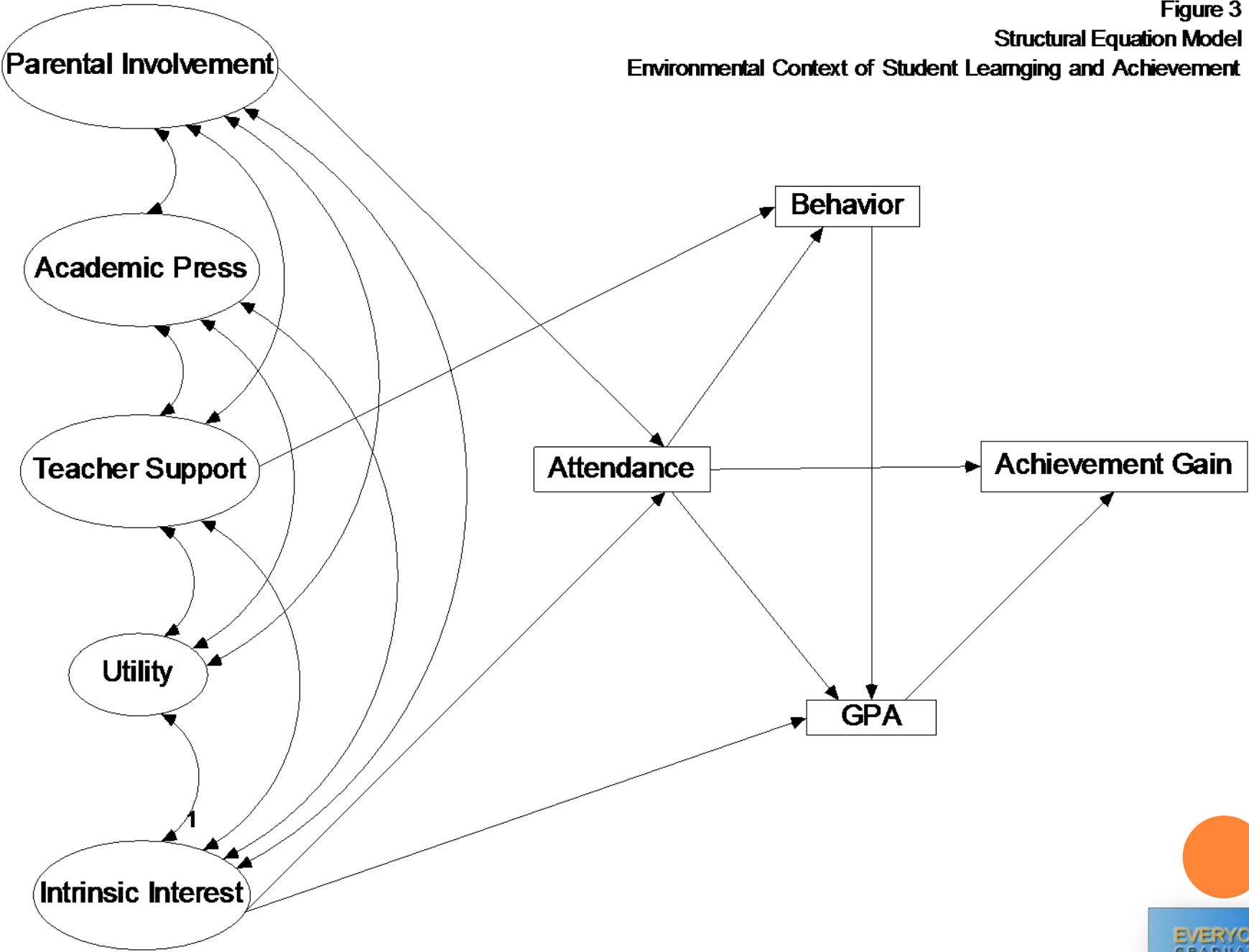
COMPREHENSIVE, SYSTEMATIC AND SUSTAINED WHOLE SCHOOL REFORMS WHICH ADDRESS ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR, AND COURSE PERFORMANCE

- Limited reforms or partial implementation will lead to limited or partial success.

Figure 3

Structural Equation Model

Environmental Context of Student Learning and Achievement



FOCUS ON THE KEY TRANSITION POINTS

- Into the middle grades
- Into high school
- Out of high school



AT EACH TRANSITION POINT CONSIDER BOTH ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL NEEDS

- Middle Grades-Intermediate Academic Skills (reading comprehension and fluency, transition from arithmetic to mathematics) and a need for adventure and camaraderie.
- High School-Transition to Adult Behaviors and Mind Set and a path to college and career readiness, as well as the right extra help for students with below grade level skills.

LINK EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS TO TIERED INTERVENTIONS

- Need to be able to respond to the first signs that a student is falling off track.
- Systematically apply school-wide preventative, targeted and intensive interventions until students are on-track.
- Great place to use National Service organizations (City Year, Americorps) to provide the person power to provide mentoring, tutoring, home work support, and manage attendance and behavior programs at the needed scale for an affordable price.
- Need integrated student support providers (e.g. Communities in Schools) to bring in and monitor case-managed professional supports for the most in need students.





PUBLIC HEALTH PREVENTION MODEL FOR STUDENT DISENGAGEMENT

Need Intervention Discipline -

**Only provide targeted supports when School-wide
Prevention does not work**

Only Provide Intensive when Targeted Does not Work

KEEPING EARLY SECONDARY STUDENTS ON TRACK TO GRADUATION (GRADES 6-9)

Category	Academic Interventions	Behavioral/Attendance Interventions
Whole School Preventative	<p>Research and Standards Based Core Curriculum</p> <p>Extended Time Math and Literacy Blocks</p> <p>Benchmark Assessments</p>	<p>Positive Behavior Supports</p> <p>Attendance Campaigns (first absence brings a response/social incentives)</p> <p>Hands On/Minds On Courses (Music, Art, Science, Debate, Sports)</p>
Targeted	<p>Reduced Class Size</p> <p>Elective Replacement Extra Help</p> <p>Courses Linked to Core Course</p>	<p>Behavior/Attendance Team-Problem Solving, Contracts and Daily Monitoring</p> <p>Mentoring</p>
Intensive	Tutoring	Social Service Supports



STEP 3: INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INCLUDES:

- A community compact-multi-year plan to end the dropout crisis.
- Community can provide program managers, not just incentives.
- Work with social service providers to coordinate efforts and make the case for investing social service dollars in school prevention efforts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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