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LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTING EARLY WARNING INTERVENTION AND MONITORING SYSTEMS

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American Institutes for Research

Established in 1946, with headquarters in Washington, DC, American Institutes for Research (AIR) is an independent, nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research and delivers technical assistance both domestically and internationally.

As one of the largest behavioral and social science research organizations in the world, AIR is committed to empowering communities and institutions with innovative solutions to the most critical challenges in education, health, workforce, and international development.
Agenda

1. An overview to early warning systems
2. Key early warning indicators
3. Lessons learned from early warning intervention and monitoring system (EWIMS) randomized control trial
4. Overview of EWIMS and resources
Introductions

• Name

• Role and location

• Share two things:
  – Why you were interested in this session
  – One thing that will make this session successful for you
Early warning systems

• What’s an EWS outside of education?
Key Terms

• Early warning indicators (EWI): measures that determine if a student is at risk of educational outcome of interest; should be valid and reliable

• Early warning system (EWS): process of using EWI data to identify at-risk students early and take action to get students back on track

• Early warning intervention and monitoring system (EWIMS): AIR’s seven-step EWS implementation model; EWIMS research base meets ESSA evidence

• Outcome of interest: an EWS needs to have an outcome of interest; most common is on-time high school graduation
AIR’s Early Warning System History

• National High School Center
  – Free Excel tool for high school and middle school (downloaded more than 30,000 times)
  – Free implementation support

• Validated early warning indicators for states and districts

• Conducted external evaluations of other early warning system programs

• Provided technical assistance in over 30 states
AIR’s EWS Implementation Pathway

1. Synthesize Research
2. Validate Indicators
3. Customize and Develop Tools and Supports
4. Launch and Implement Early Warning Intervention Monitoring System
5. Assess and Improve Processes
What is an EWS?

An EWS:

• Uses readily available school data

• Relies on indicators that predict students’ likelihood of meeting a desired outcome (e.g., high school graduation, college readiness)

• Includes a tool for educators to target student interventions

• Provides information to educators so that adults can take actions to support at-risk students in a timely manner
Key Early Warning Indicators: ABCs
Common Early Warning Indicators for High School Graduation

- Attendance
- Behavior
- Course Performance

Images from Freepic and Eucalyp on flaticon.com
A Few Absences Can Add Up

Ninth-Grade GPA by Number of Days Absent, Chicago Public Schools

(Allensworth et al, 2015)
Early Warning Indicators

*Early warning indicators are used only for prediction—they do not cause students to drop out. Rather, they should be treated as symptoms of the dropout process that is in progress.*

Research from several U.S. school districts provides a strong foundation for early warning indicators, but *local adaptation is key.*
Lessons Learned from Implementing an Early Warning System

The study of the Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System
Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS)
On-Time Graduation Project Study by REL Midwest

(Faria et al, 2017)
EWIMS School Sample

73 participating schools

86% average four-year graduation rate

321 average grade 9 school enrollment

38% rated as "high" on initial data capacity
50 Percent of Students Flagged as At Risk in the EWS Tool

12 percent of students flagged for both chronic absence and course failures

- 30 percent for chronic absence
- 26 percent for failing one or more courses
- 24 percent for a low GPA
- 6 percent for suspensions
Results: Attendance

A lower percentage of students were at risk due to chronic absence in schools implementing EWIMS compared to control schools.

Statistically Significant
Results: Course Performance

A lower percentage of students were at risk due to course failure in schools implementing EWIMS compared to control schools.

Statistically Significant

Failed any course

- EWIMS schools: 21%
- Control schools: 26%
Interesting Realization

*All schools* reported using data to support high school graduation, but *only EWIMS schools* had statistically significant impacts for improving attendance and course performance.
Implementation Challenges

Common challenges included:

- Difficulty importing data into the tool
- Staff turnover (challenges getting new team members up to speed)
- Limited staff time to fully implement EWIMS
Discussion Time

• What questions does this raise?
• What resonates for you?
• What do you want to learn more about?
• What similar experiences do you have?

Introduce yourself to someone you don’t know, discuss these questions, and be prepared to report out.
Lessons Learned

• School Level
  – Empower action through effective leadership
  – Beware overwhelming staff
  – Take a whole-student, whole-school approach

• District Level
  – Empower schools
  – Identify and address district-wide needs
  – Streamline access to data

Source: O'Cummings & Therriault, 2015
AIR’s EWS Implementation Pathway

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Resources and Questions
The Implementation Path

States, districts, and schools use research-based indicators to identify students at-risk or falling to meet key educational milestones such as reading at grade level, on-time graduation, or college readiness and college persistence. By identifying students early, educators can target interventions and supports to help students achieve readiness and success. From the early stages of planning through evaluating results, AIR works with education leaders to customize and refine early warning systems based on the best available research and evidence. See how we help schools, districts, and states develop effective early warning systems.

Synthesize Research
Validate Indicators
Customize Tools and Supports
Launch and Implement
Assess and Improve
EWS Resources

- IES Early Warning Systems Learning Series

- REL West: A Practitioner’s Guide to Implementing an Early Warning System
On-Time Graduation Project Study Results

- Getting Students On Track For Graduation: Impacts of the Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System After One Year
  
  [Link](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/publications/career_readiness.aspx)
Questions?
References


Balfanz, R., Putting middle grades students on the graduation path (Policy and Practice Brief) (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Everyone Graduates Center, 2009), https://www.amle.org/portals/0/pdf/articles/Policy_Brief_Balfanz.pdf.


References

Extra Slides
Preventing Drop Out in Secondary School: Recommendations

Monitor progress
• Proactively intervene when students show early signs of attendance, behavior, or academic problems

Provide intensive, individualized support
• Direct resources to students who have fallen off track and face significant challenges to success

Engage students
• Offer curricula and programs that connect schoolwork with college and career success

Create small, personalized communities
• Ideal for schools with many at-risk students to facilitate monitoring and support

(Rumberger et al, 2017)