

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

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The Mid Atlantic Equity Center
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BEYOND THE INDICATORS: An Integrated School-Level Approach to Dropout Prevention

Douglas J. Mac Iver

Martha Abele Mac Iver

The Everyone Graduates Center

Johns Hopkins University

Dropout Voices

“Teachers never paid no attention to me. I didn’t like school or the teachers, and so I cut out... [When] I made an effort to get to school on time ... I still failed. So I said I have to stop going. I’m not getting anywhere. Just keep getting left behind.”

(Female dropout from New York City,
Quoted in Fine, 1991, p. 77)

Unintended Consequences of NCLB

- High schools quietly ignored those dropping out
- Some even actively pushed out students who would lower the test scores for which those high schools were being held accountable
- High school dropouts were still left behind

But Dropout Prevention Is Now on the Front Burner

“Dropping out is quitting on yourself, it’s quitting on your country, and it’s not an option – not anymore ... Stemming the tide of dropouts will require turning around our low-performing schools. Just 2,000 high schools in cities like Detroit and Los Angeles and Philadelphia produce over 50 percent of America's dropouts. And yet there are too few proven strategies to transform these schools. And there are too few partners to get the job done.”

President Obama



There has been a quarter-century of research
on the dropout issue in the United States.

We already know a lot about the process
leading to dropout outcomes.

The challenge
is to do something about it.

Webinar Overview

- Brief review of dropout research
- What are the Early Warning Indicators?
- Going beyond the indicators:
 - Description of Johns Hopkins University Everyone Graduates Center dropout prevention model based on:
 - Strong comprehensive school reform
 - Data-driven early warning system
 - Tiered interventions in an integrated public health model

What We Know about Why Students Drop Out of School

- Educational performance (particularly course failure) and behaviors (attendance & suspensions) are more powerful predictors of dropout than demographic background and attitudes
- School factors (that can be addressed through reform) are particularly important predictors of dropout

The ABCs Leading to Dropout

Students are knocked off course to high school graduation in the grades 6 through 9 by the ABCs

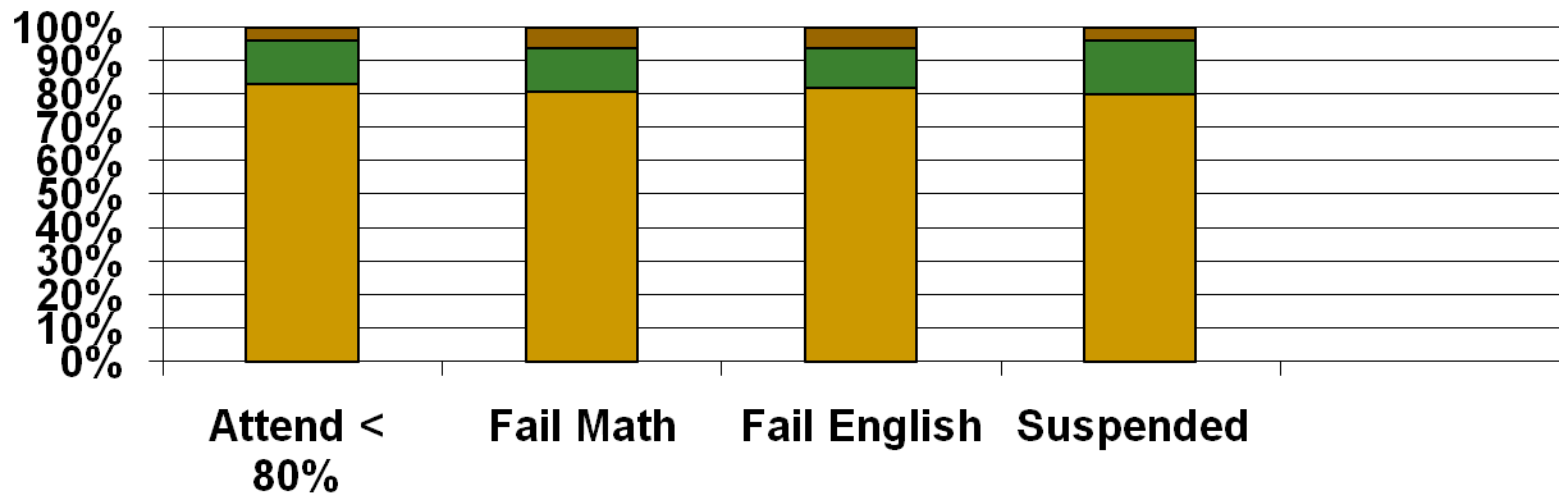
Attendance

Behavior

Course Failure

6th Graders with Poor Attendance, Behavior or Course Failure have Extremely Low Graduation Rates

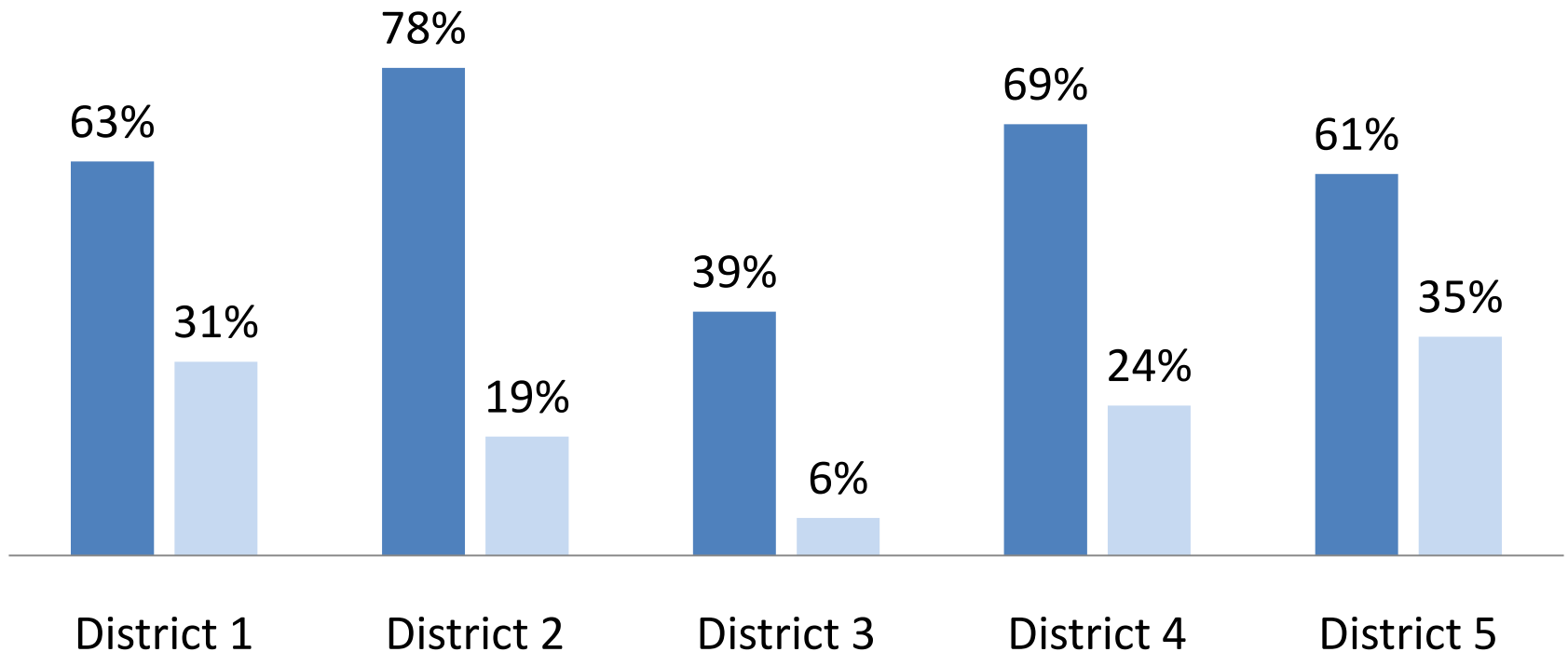
Graduation Outcomes for Students with 6th Grade Off-Track Indicators-Philadelphia



■ Does Not Graduate ■ Graduates On Time ■ Graduates with One Extra Year

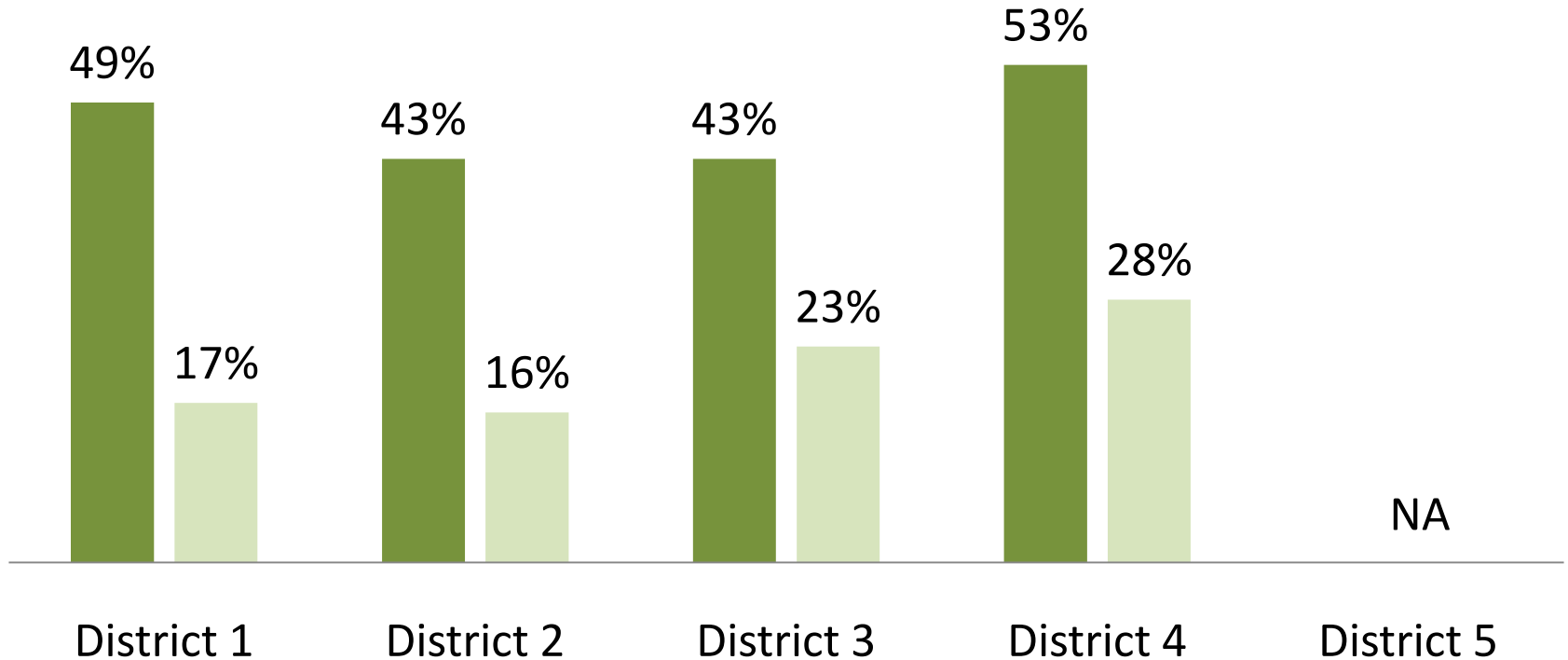
Attendance

- % of dropouts chronically absent in year prior to dropout
- % of graduates chronically absent in year prior to graduation



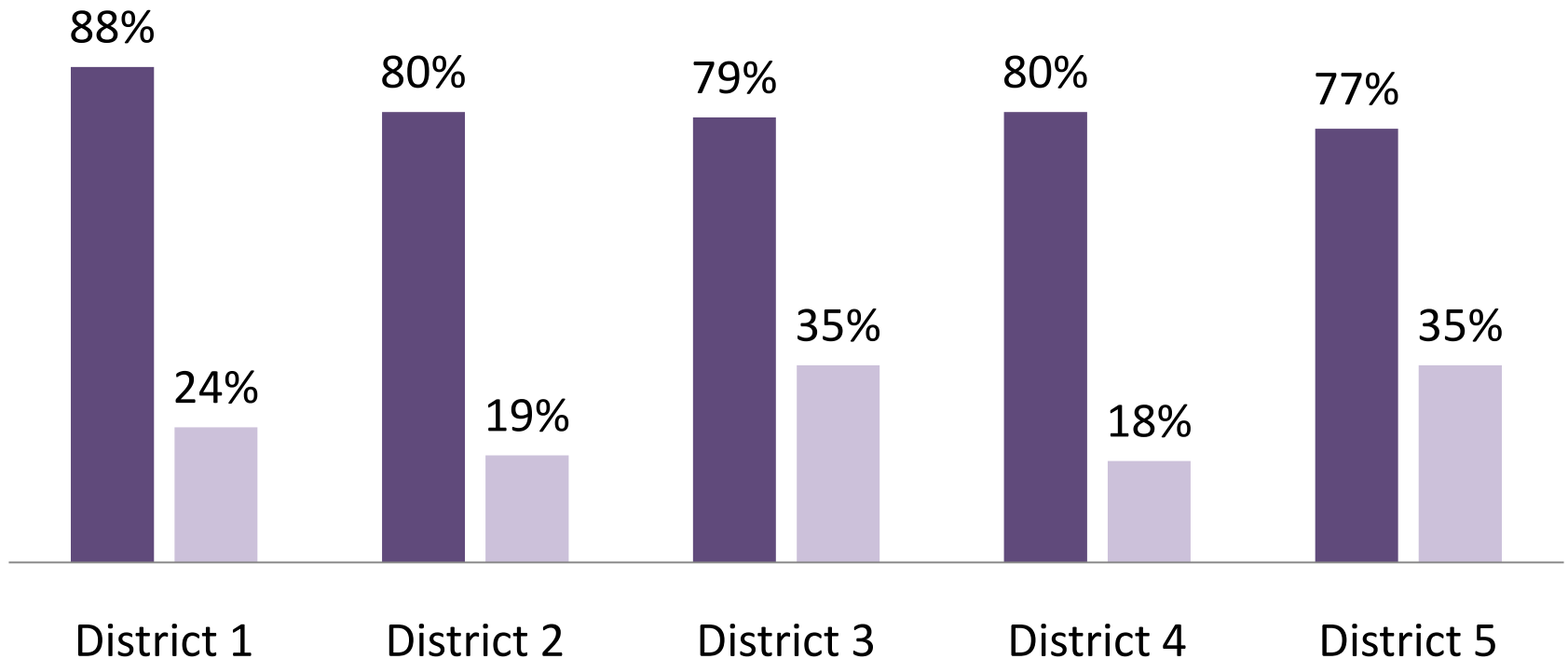
Behavior

- % of dropouts with at least one suspension in four years
- % of graduates with at least one suspension in four years

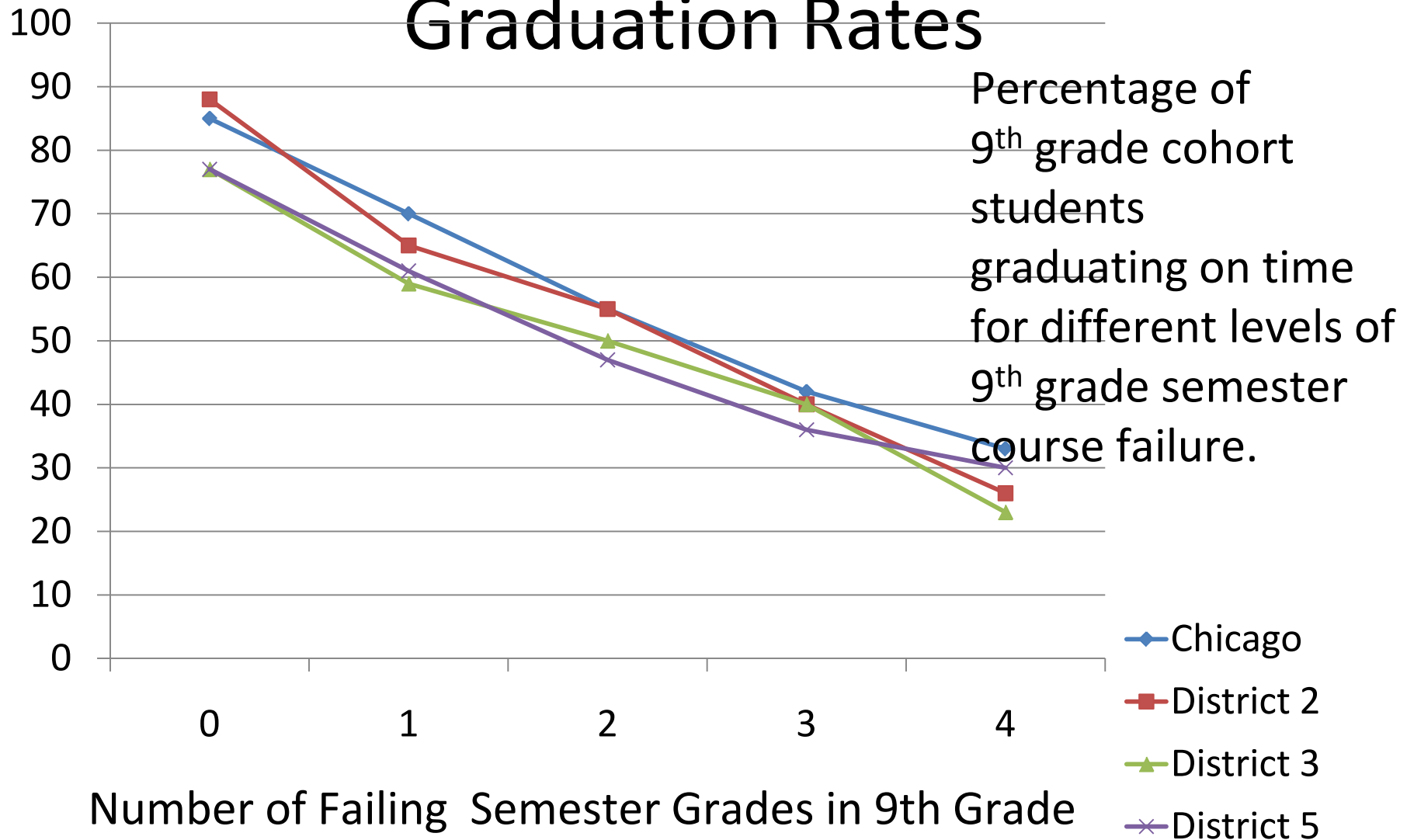


Course Failure

- % of dropouts with one or more semester Fs in 9th grade
- % of graduates with one or more semester Fs in 9th grade



Impact of Semester Course Failure on Graduation Rates



Going Beyond the Indicators

- Knowing the ABCs, the early warning indicators, is an important first step
- But we need to go beyond the indicators to establish an effective early warning system and make timely interventions to prevent dropout outcomes
- How do we address dropout prevention in a systematic, integrated way?

The ABCs of Dropout Prevention

- ❑ **A**nalyze existing policies/practices related to attendance, behavior, and course grading and to credit recovery opportunities
- ❑ **B**uild consensus on goals and strategies for dropout prevention (reducing absences, suspensions, and course failures) and dropout recovery.
- ❑ **C**reate integrated school structures
 - ❑ whole school reforms with teacher teams
 - ❑ school level student supportsTo assure appropriate/timely interventions to keep all students on track to on-time graduation and provide credit recovery opportunities

Grad Nation Toolkit

www.every1graduates.org

Interactive
toolkit
to help
communities
tackle
the dropout
crisis



<http://maec.ceee.gwu.edu/> / *Mid Atlantic Equity Center*

Creating Integrated Structures

Three-tiered Prevention Model for Schools



Intensive
interventions

Targeted Interventions for
struggling students

Comprehensive School Reform
(preventing problem behaviors for majority
of students)

Early Warning System

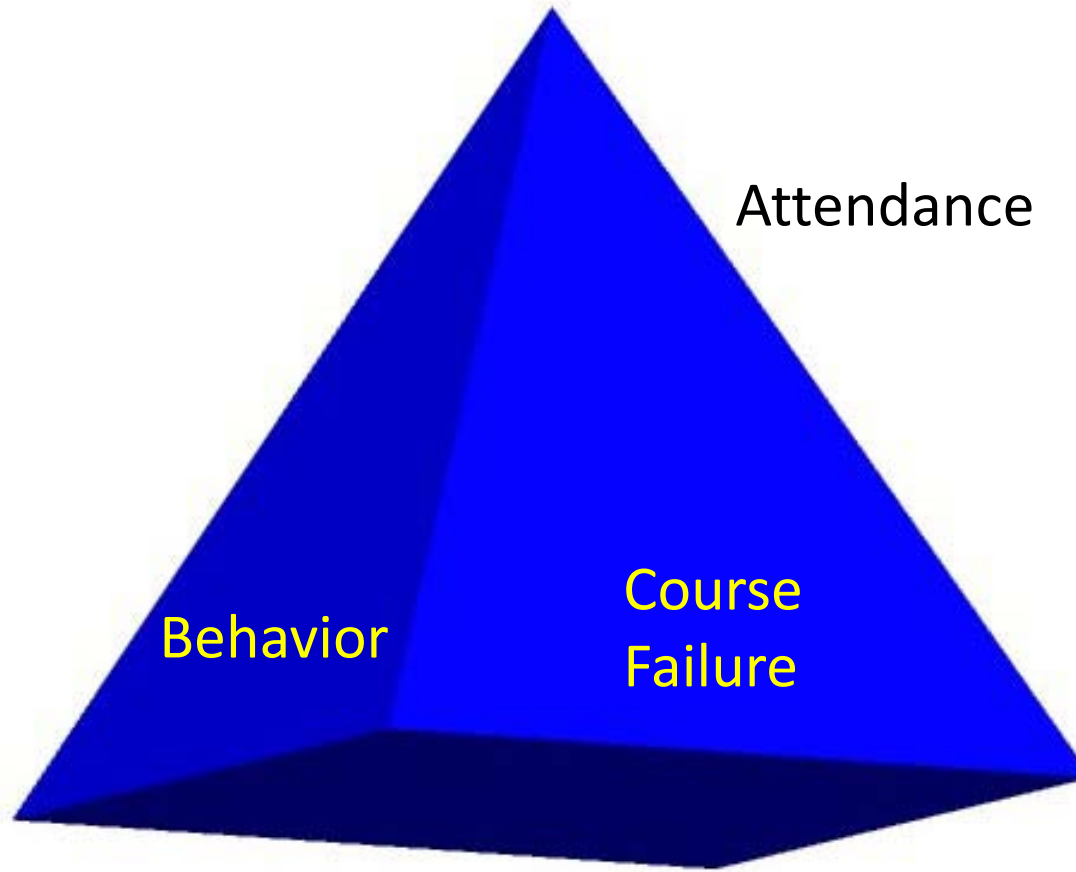
A 3-Tier Prevention Model

1. Primary Level -- Schoolwide programs aimed at alleviating 75% or so of the problem behaviors (attendance, behavior, course failure), including an early warning system
2. Secondary Level -- Targeted shepherding for the 15% to 20% of students who need additional supports beyond the schoolwide efforts
3. Tertiary Level -- Intensive efforts involving specialists (counselors, social workers, tutors) for the 5% to 10% who need more clinical types of support

Integration of PBIS and RTI

- This model addresses attendance, behavior and course performance (academics) simultaneously in an integrated way
- Similar to PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) and RTI (Response to Intervention) three-tiered models, but more comprehensive
- Builds on how schools are already attempting to implement PBIS and RTI – but gives them an integrated strategy

ABCs on the Pyramid



ABCs on the Pyramid

	Attendance (PBIS)	Behavior (PBIS)	Course Failure (Academics) (RTI)
1	Attendance Campaigns (first absence brings a response/social incentives) Hands On/Minds On Courses (Music, Art, Science, Debate, Sports)	Schoolwide training in positive behavior Positive Behavior Supports	Research and Standards Based Core Curriculum Extended Time Math and Literacy Blocks Benchmark Assessments
2	Team-Problem Solving, Contracts and Daily Monitoring Mentoring	Team-Problem Solving, Contracts and Daily Monitoring Mentoring	Reduced Class Size Elective Replacement Extra Help Courses Linked to Core Course
3	Social Service Supports	Social Service Supports	Tutoring

Integration is KEY

- A patchwork of separate, non-integrated programs is generally not an effective approach
- All issues need to be addressed simultaneously in a systematic, integrated way
- If schools are only doing pieces of this model and not integrating it altogether, they are unlikely to see much success

The 3-Tiered Prevention Model in Action

Example of an early warning system and tiered interventions in action:

DIPLOMAS NOW pilot project at Feltonville School of Arts and Sciences, a high poverty middle school in Philadelphia

Key Components of Early Warning and Intervention System

- Provision of regularly updated warning indicator DATA on each student to school personnel
- Organization of a SECOND TEAM OF ADULTS (including public service interns and volunteers as well as social services professionals) to assist in delivery of interventions for students showing warning indicators.
- Regular (bi-weekly) MEETINGS of school personnel teams to discuss students with warning indicators (planning and following up on interventions)

Provision of Data

Name	Absent Last Yr	Neg Behav Comments Last 2 Cards	June 08 Math Grade	June 08 Literacy Grade	June 08 Math Level	June 08 Reading Level
Student 1	53	10	D	F	Proficient	Basic
Student 2	36	7	D	D	Basic	Basic
Student 3	14	1	B	C	Basic	Proficient
Student 4	5	6	B	C	Basic	Basic
Student 5	18	7	C	F	< Basic	< Basic
Student 6	29	1	C	D	< Basic	< Basic
Student 7	6	8	D	D	< Basic	< Basic
Student 8	46	3	B	F	Basic	< Basic
Student 9	41	4	C	D	< Basic	< Basic
Student10	17	1	B	D	< Basic	< Basic
Student...	61	7	F	C	< Basic	Basic
Student78	24	10	F	D	< Basic	Basic

Second Team of Adults

Each homeroom has a City Year corps member who travels from class to class with the students and provides support for the various targeted interventions.

At FSAS, two social workers from Communities in Schools coordinate the provision of intensive interventions to students and families.

Semi-Monthly Meetings

Student	Past EWI	EWI Today	Level of Concern	Student Strengths	Tier-Responder-intervention	Better Same or Worse?
Student1	53 days abs	10 days abs	Severe	Strong math skills	2-CY-DC 2-CY-ASA	
	10 neg beh coments	Calls out Leaves seat	Moderate	Friendly	2-CY-BEP	
	F Literacy	DPAL, LBL	Severe	5 th rdg lvl	3-LS-IN	
Student2	36 days abs	2 days abs	Moderate	Art Skills	2-CY-GBN	
	7 neg beh comments	Annoys clssmates Makes inapprop. Commnts	Severe	Does Homewk	2-CY-BEP	

Team members discuss students who are showing a warning indicator, plan interventions, & evaluate effectiveness

Impact of the Pilot Program

This Early Warning and Intervention system is already having positive impact, helping to:

increase attendance,
reduce behavior problems,
improve grades

for students who have been showing early warning indicators.

Pilot Results, Sept. 2008 to March 2009

Early warning sign	# of students off-path	# of these students still off-path in March 2009	% reduction in the # who are still off-path
Failed Math in 6/08 or 12/09	65	25	62%
Failed Literacy in 6/08 or 12/09	86	22	74%
Had less than 80% Attendance in 6/08 or 12/09	38	23	39%
3+ negative behavior comments on report card in 6/08 or 12/09	409	255	38%

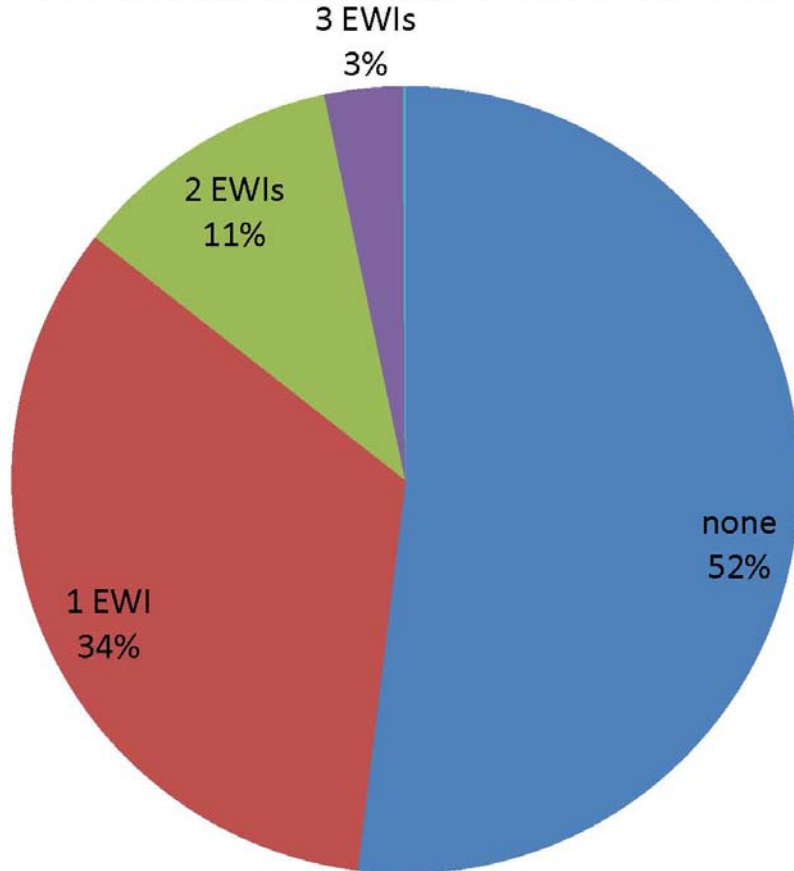
School has 721 students

How many students were still off-path or newly off-path in March 2009?

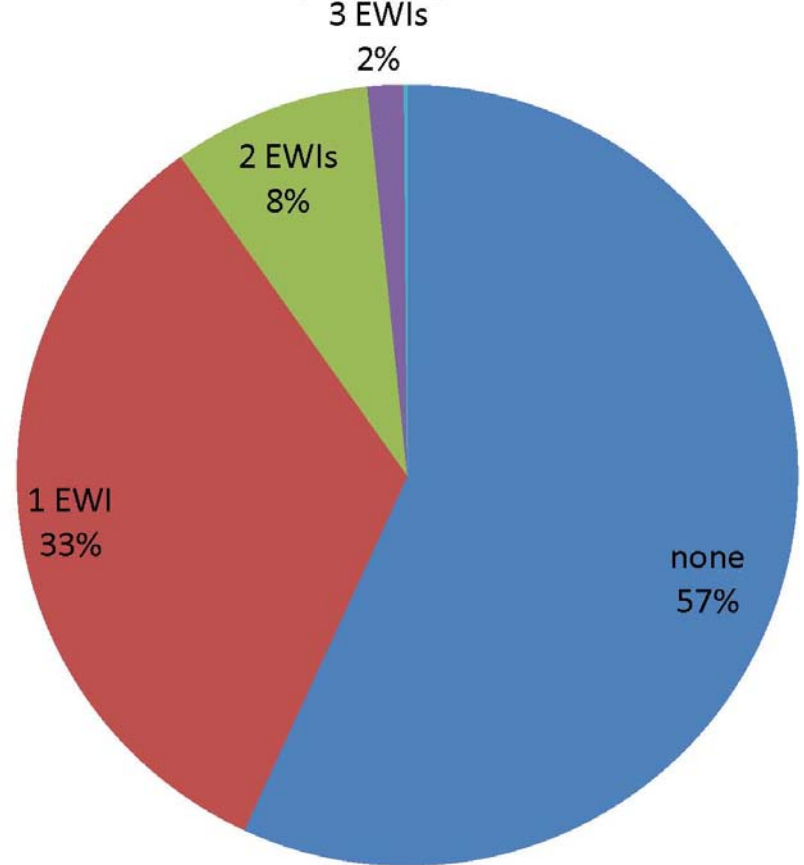
Early warning sign	# of previously-flagged who were still off path	# newly off - path	Total off-path in March 2009
Failed Math	25	13	38
Failed Literacy	22	7	29
Less than 80% attendance	23	6	29
3+ negative behavior comments	255	45	300

Improvement over 3 Months

Students with Early Warning Indicators in Dec '08



Students with Early Warning Indicators in March 09



Need for a Stronger Primary Foundation

- Evidence of progress – but more progress is needed
- When the early warning system indicates that more than 25 to 30 percent of students have an early warning indicator and need secondary or tertiary level interventions, further reforms to the primary foundation are still needed.
- Stronger school wide efforts aimed at preventing these early warning indicators from developing are essential. This school especially needs a better school wide positive behavior system!

Conclusions

We can address the ABC dropout indicators

Attendance

Behavior


Course Failure

through

Strong whole school reforms


Early Warning Systems

Tiered Interventions




It is essential that prevention and tiered interventions begin by sixth grade at the latest,

because patterns of chronic absenteeism and failure can become so entrenched and widespread by ninth grade that effective intervention becomes more difficult.



This is a doable task,
even in times of scarce resources.

The dividends –
in more high school graduates
who are making a contribution to society –
are well worth the effort and investment
required.



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