



Dropout Prevention: A Literature Synthesis

In the United States, there's bad news and good news about high school dropouts.

The bad news:

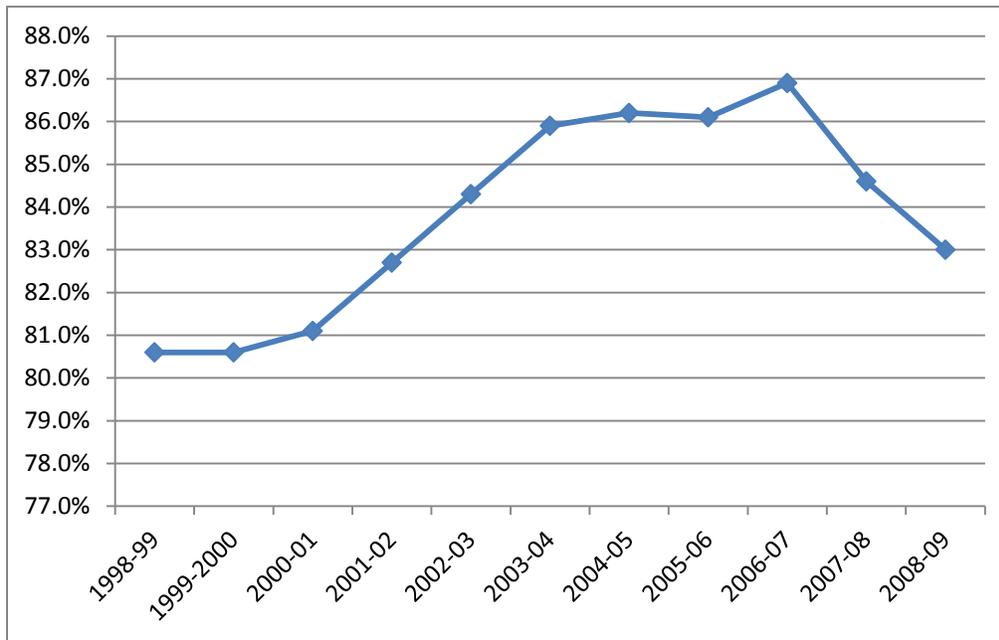
- Every 26 seconds, another student gives up on school—about 7,000 students every school day, resulting in 1.3 million students dropping out of high school every year.^{11,48}
- Nearly one-third of all public high school students do not graduate with their class.¹¹
- About 65% of males and 73% of females graduate.³⁶
- Nearly one-half of all African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans in public school will not graduate with their class.¹¹
- High school students from low-income families drop out at six times the rate of students from high-income families.³⁶
- Students with disabilities, especially learning disabilities and behavioral/emotional disabilities, drop out at twice the rate of other students.^{12,31}
- Foreign-born students had a dropout rate of 21% in 2009, compared with 13% for children born in the U.S. to foreign-born parents. Foreign-born students make up 10% percent of the total population of students in this age group, but 25% of the dropout population.¹⁴
- The dropout epidemic is more severe in some areas — both urban and rural — than in others: Approximately 15 percent of high schools in America (which researchers call “dropout factories”) produce close to half of the nation’s dropouts and over two-thirds of its minority dropouts.^{5,11,48}
- Minority students are much more likely to be enrolled in dropout factories: 35% of all African-American, 29% of all Hispanic, 19% of all Native American, 14% of all Asian, and 7% of all white students.³⁶
- In nearly 2,000 high schools in the U.S., 40% of typical freshman class students drop out by their senior year.¹¹
- Among developed countries, the U.S. ranks 18th in high school graduation rates and 15th in college graduation rates.¹¹
- Despite frequent calls to action, graduation rates have remained largely unchanged over the last 30 years.¹¹

The good news:

- The nation’s graduation rate has reached its highest point in 2 decades. The proportion of public high school students earning diplomas for the class of 2008 approached 72%, exceeding an earlier peak in 1991. Every racial and ethnic group posted solid gains for the class of 2008, marking the second straight year of across-the-board improvements.¹⁷
- The number of “dropout factory” high schools fell by 13%—from 2,007 such schools in 2002 to 1,746 in 2008.¹⁸
- More than half of all states (29) increased their statewide graduation rates from 2002 to 2008.¹⁸

What’s the news in Ohio?

The statewide graduation rate takes two steps forward and one step back. The statewide rate, which had been rising since 1998-99, dropped four percentage points from a peak of 87.0% in 2006-07 to 83.0% in 2008-09.



Ohio Graduation Rate

Source: Ohio Department of Education. (2010). 2009-2010 State Report Card.

However, there were 8 fewer dropout factories in 2009 than 2002 and 21,184 fewer students attended dropout factories in 2009 than in 2002.²⁹

Ohio Education Matters³⁸ reports that

- Ohio’s dropout problem is concentrated in a handful of schools.
- The heart of Ohio’s dropout problem continues to be the urban core. In both 2004-05 and 2007-08, all of the 30 worst high schools for dropouts were in urban areas. Two big-city districts—Cleveland Metropolitan and Columbus City—together accounted for more than half the 30 worst schools in both years.

- The disparity between Ohio’s best and worst dropout schools is vast. The average dropout rate in the 30 worst schools was more than four times the average of other schools.
- Ohio schools with the highest dropout rates made above-average progress in graduating students. Among the 30 schools with the biggest dropout problem in 2004-05, the dropout rate fell from 38.5% to 33.6% over 4 years, compared to a drop of 1.8 points for the cohort of traditional schools overall.
- Significant improvement has occurred in a few worst-case schools. Of the 30 schools with the highest dropout rates in 2004-05, eight made significant improvements over four years – enough to lift them out of the bottom 30 in 2007-08.
- A core of schools continues to struggle with high dropout rates. More than a third of these schools saw already steep dropout rates climb even higher. In the most troubling instances, dropout rates climbed by more than 15%—resulting in schools where more than 6 in 10 students left school without graduating.

There has been a 70% increase of young people, ages 18-21, incarcerated in Ohio during the last 10 years; 80% of these young people dropped out of high school before they went to prison.⁵

Ohio is considered 1 of 17 “make or break” states in an analysis conducted by Jobs for the Future and the Everyone Graduates Center.⁹ The overwhelming majority of school districts in Ohio (95.4%) have no high schools with very low graduation rates. However, because of its large population, the state still has a significant number of high schools with low graduation rates (94, or 13.9% of all high schools). About 13.5% of all high school students in Ohio attend low graduation-rate high schools. Five major cities in Ohio have significant numbers of high schools with high dropout rates, including Columbus.

Closer to home, there’s more bad news and good news.

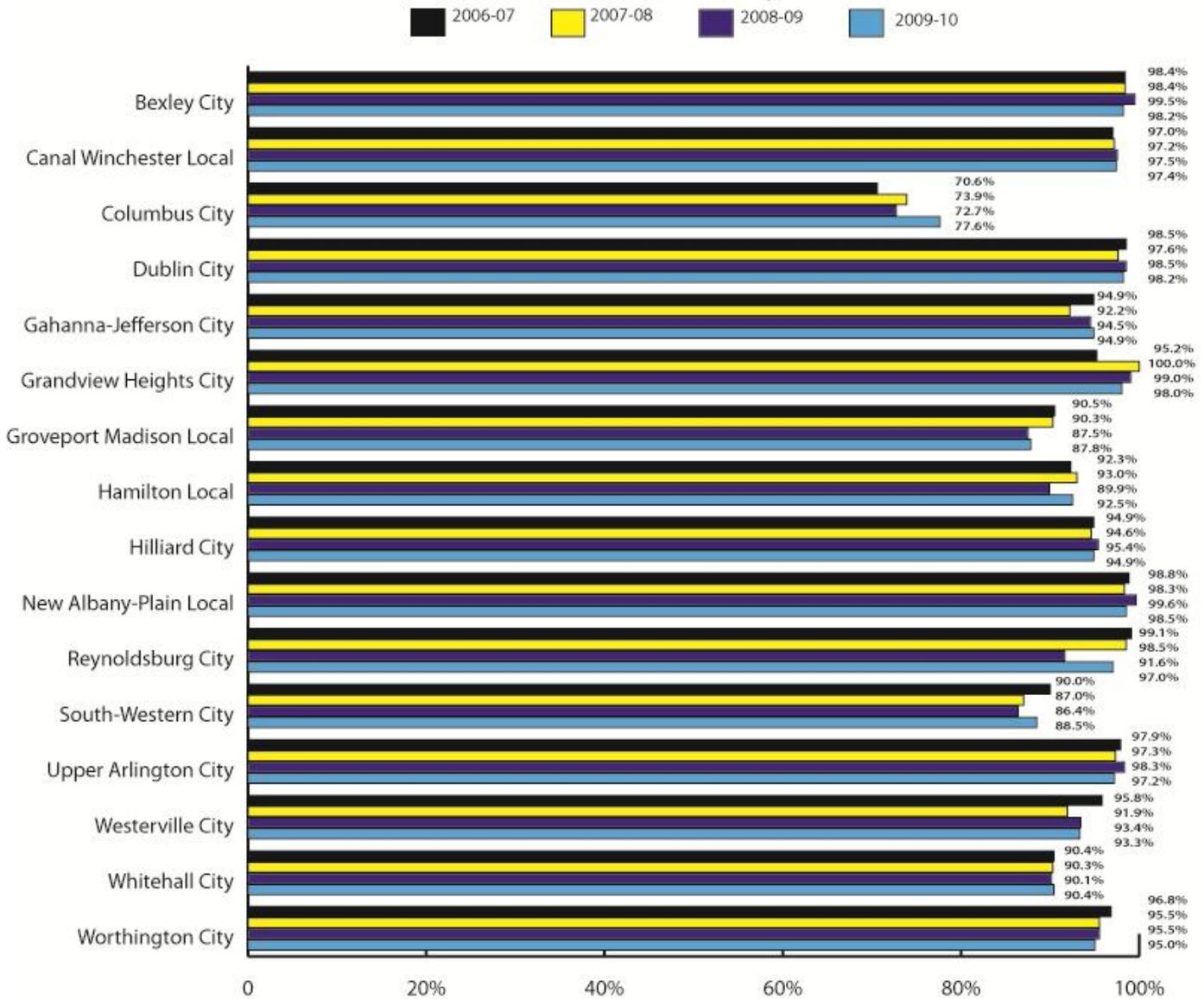
Franklin County’s graduation rate ranks in the bottom 6 of Ohio’s 88 counties.⁵¹

In the Columbus metropolitan area, 20.7% of the school-age population of 78,006 attends Columbus City Schools (CCS). In 2004-05, CCS had a graduation rate of 44.7%, 42nd among the most populous 50 cities in the United States. However, that represented a 12.6% increase from 1995 to 2005, compared with 4.4% average for the 50 cities.⁴⁶

The overall graduation rate in the Columbus metropolitan area was 74.9% in 2004-05 but location made a difference: suburban districts graduated 82.8% of their students, compared to 44.7% for urban districts, a gap of 38.1%, third highest among the top 50 cities. However, the gap decreased 8.1% from 1995 to 2005, fourth best among the top 50.⁴⁶

A comparison of the graduation rates of Franklin County’s 16 school districts illustrates the urban-suburban gap:

Graduation Rates, Franklin County School Districts



Source: Ohio Department of Education, Interactive Local Report Card (2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09); Richards, 2011 (2009-10 preliminary figures)

Among the top 50 cities, metro Columbus ranked #1 in diploma advantage at 231% (high school graduate income as a percentage of less-than-high-school income). At the same time, the poverty rate for persons with less than high school education was 30.6% in 2007, fifth highest among the top 50.⁴⁶

Franklin County is home to about one-quarter of Ohio's foreign-born population, including the second largest Somali population in the United States. From 2001 to 2004, the number of immigrant children in Franklin County school districts increased by 29.2%. Nearly half (45.6%) of the estimated 4,500 immigrant students in Franklin County school districts in 2004 were enrolled in Columbus City Schools. Because these youth often deal with complex economic,

cultural, academic, and personal issues, including English language proficiency, they are at risk of dropping out of school.¹⁶

The High Cost of Dropping Out—to Students and Taxpayers

Not completing high school has serious personal, social, and economic consequences both for individuals and for their communities, states, and the nation.^{11,36}

- Dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to be unemployed, in poor health, living in poverty, or on public assistance.
- Dropouts were more than twice as likely as high school graduates to slip into poverty in a single year and three times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed in 2004.
- Dropouts are more than eight times as likely to be in jail or in prison than are high school graduates.
- Dropouts are four times less likely to volunteer than are college graduates and half as likely to vote or participate in community projects, and they represent only 3% of actively engaged citizens in the U.S. today.
- The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2005 was \$17,299, compared to \$26,933 for a high school graduate. College graduates earn on average \$1 million more over a lifetime than do high school dropouts.
- 75% of the nation's state prison inmates, nearly 59% of federal inmates, and 69% of jail inmates did not complete high school.
- Nearly half of the projected job growth will be concentrated in occupations associated with higher education and skill levels. High school dropouts will not be able to qualify for these jobs.

In Ohio, if half of the estimated 39,200 students who dropped out of the class of 2010 had graduated, these 19,600 graduates would have added to the state's economy.⁵

- \$199 million in increased earnings
- \$149 million in increased spending and \$50 million in increased investments
- \$450 million in increased home sales and \$20 million in increased auto sales
- 1,400 new jobs with \$236 million in economic growth
- \$18 million in increased tax revenue

At the same time, the state would save⁴

- \$502 million in health care costs over the lifetimes of each class of dropouts had they earned their diplomas
- \$132 million a year in community college remediation costs and lost earnings
- a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about \$233 million each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5%

An analysis of Ohio's dropout prevention efforts calculated the costs associated with increased numbers of graduates:³⁹

- Over the course of a lifetime, Ohio residents can expect to recover \$31.45 in economic and fiscal benefits for every public and private dollar invested in a student completing his or her education.
- In a lifetime, a high school graduate will earn an additional \$473,713, contribute an additional \$26,508 in income and sales taxes, and require \$105,280 less in government assistance. In addition, a would-be dropout turned high school graduate would save society \$77,714 in incarceration costs.
- The state economy would likely grow by \$7.6 billion as a result of increased individual earnings and the resulting increases in productivity.
- Currently, the annual costs associated with dropouts total more than \$548 per individual taxpayer. As the graduation rate increases, these costs would decrease over time.
- Ohio residents could realize a full lifetime benefit of more than \$661,493 per high school graduate.

Why Do Youth Drop Out?

Sometimes dropping out is a sudden decision in response to personal crisis, but for many youth it is the result of a long process of disengagement and alienation. The leading reason cited by students for dropping out: not seeing the connection between classroom learning and their own lives and career dreams.¹³

The factors that lead an individual youth to drop out or that make certain groups more likely to drop out are complex and multidimensional; they often include a combination of

- *Personal/social factors*: boredom, and perceived lack of relevance; student absences, poor early academic preparation, and inability to catch up once behind; uninspiring teaching; lack of parental support; a difficult home environment; need to work to support family; early parenthood.^{13,21,54}
- *Factors related to schools*: large schools and class sizes, impersonal or negative school climate, and policies such as raising academic standards without providing supports, tracking or labeling, or retention in grade, receiving a long-term suspension; lack of extracurricular enrichment; disjunction between family and school: home language, customs, values.^{21,31,44,54}

Although dropout research demonstrates that these influences are complex and interrelated, too often responses are focused on “‘fixing’ the student rather than on identifying what school characteristics contribute to a student leaving school.”^{35,p. 176} In any approach to dropout prevention, a preferable beginning point is to avoid a perspective that views youth as deficient. Instead, approaches to dropping out should assume that struggling students have not only problems, but likely strengths as well and “provide opportunities for students to be recognized and acknowledged as valuable and as contributors to a greater good.”^{35,p. 177}

What Works

Identifying what works is challenging for a number of reasons. Multiple, complex causes require multiple solutions; therefore, it is difficult to isolate the impact of a specific intervention on dropping out.²⁰ Another reason is that “students who participate in dropout prevention

programs are seldom a random sample of the relevant population of at-risk students. Students in a given program either self-select into that program, or they are administratively assigned to the program.”^{49, p. 16}

Nevertheless, extensive analyses of research and reports have yielded a reasonable consensus about some factors. Taking into account the personal/social and school-based factors that contribute to dropping out, it is clear that youth need help, hope, and individualization: *help* in terms of consistent academic, psychosocial, and other services; *hope*—being able to envision a future for themselves and a connection between learning and living into that future; and *individual attention* to what is happening in youths’ lives and in their schools and communities that hinders their high school completion.

The following recommendations for effective strategies are based on research by the U.S. Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse¹⁹ and by the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University,^{9,10} fleshed out by a synthesis of other research and reports. Each strategy includes references to one or more descriptions of programs that illustrate them, which are presented in the final section.

Obtain *accurate data* to identify the number of students who drop out and students at high risk of dropping out; use data to develop *early warning and intervention systems*.

To ensure on-time student graduation it is essential to prevent at-risk middle school and younger students from falling “off track” and to intervene with those already significantly off track in later years. Regularly collecting and analyzing student and community data is the critical first step for determining the scope of the dropout problem. Identifying at-risk students who are in need of extra services or supports, identifying community resources and challenges and creating an effective early warning and dropout prevention system is the next step.^{50,p.27}

The methods used to calculate graduation rates have varied among the states, making it difficult to get an accurate picture of the dropout situation. In 2005, all 50 governors agreed to a common calculation of high school graduation rates, using a “4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate” that divides the number of on-time graduates in a given year by the number of first-time entering ninth graders 4 years earlier, making adjustments for transfers in and out of schools. The federal government required states to use this calculation for the 2010-2011 school year and be held accountable for their progress based on this calculation for the 2011-2012 school year.¹¹

- Focus on effective early warning.^{20,32} “Although data such as low test scores, poverty, and minority status are correlated with dropping out of high school, they are not highly predictive of whether a student drops out. Hence they are not helpful guides for intervention, particularly in school systems where the vast majority of students share those characteristics.” The “ABC” indicators—attendance, behavior, and course performance—have demonstrated predictive power.^{30,p.16}
- Place data-driven prevention, intervention, and recovery efforts at the key points where students fall off the path to graduation (elementary, middle, high).⁴¹

- Data-driven strategies must be embedded in the culture of schools and school districts, not seen simply as an add-on. Ensure that usable data ends up in the hands of those who need it the most—those in the classroom.¹
- Collect individualized student data to track early warning indicators of potential dropouts as early as elementary and middle school and adopt a long-term approach that begins with strengthening school readiness. Provide interventions such as mentoring and tutoring, targeted literacy and math curricula support, ninth-grade academies, extended school time, and a wide range of community-based supports to address academic, social, medical, and mental health needs.^{11,26,43}
- Examples of data use: Fall River (Massachusetts) School District collated data to identify students at risk because of transportation problems, resulting in discounted bus fares.^{1,42} In Stockton, California, Central Valley School District’s Reclaiming Our Youth Center uses attendance figures, suspension numbers, dropout statistics, and student-transfer figures to track down students with 10 or more consecutive, unexcused absences and persuading them to return to school, as well as whittling down the number of students erroneously counted as dropouts.³⁴ The Milwaukee school district worked with the Wisconsin Center for Education Research to create an early-warning system that will record not only how many credits students are earning, but also the grades the students receive, to make sure the district is graduating students who have viable options after high school.¹
- The National High School Center’s Early Warning System (EWS) Tool v2.0 is a free Microsoft Excel-based program that can be used to identify and support students who are at risk of dropout: <http://www.betterhighschools.org/ews.asp>.
- Strengthen middle schools: Start with the middle grade feeder schools to dropout factory and low graduation rate high schools.¹¹ Enhance the holding power of schools by focusing intensively on ninth grade.⁴³
- The Middle Grades Intervention Alert Tool (MIAT), developed by the Southern Regional Education Board’s initiative, Making Middle Grades Work, is a data tracking system designed to help administrators and teachers identify students who show evidence of one or more of the early warning signs for potential dropout.⁸

Program examples—accurate data: First Things First, Reagan High School, Tennessee

Program examples—early warning/intervention: Accelerated Middle Schools, Diplomas Now, Project GRAD, Reagan High School, Response to Intervention, Richmond High School

Engage students in learning with *effective, rigorous, and relevant instruction*; offer *alternative models* that address the individual social needs and academic requirements of students at risk of dropping out

Many states, including Ohio, have raised standards for high school graduation and are moving to adopt common core state standards, important first steps to establishing high expectations and engaging students through challenging, meaningful.^{5,30} At the same time, states must ensure that higher standards and expectations do not drive more students to drop out of school.³⁰

- Establish fewer, clearer, and higher standards aligned with college requirements; all students should be expected to graduate from high school and college or career training programs that lead to meaningful employment.¹¹
- Teacher effectiveness has a greater impact on student achievement than any other reform under a school's control.¹¹ Ensuring that all students receive high-quality instruction requires attention to the quality and skills of the teaching staff and supporting teachers with high-quality curriculum materials that are relevant to students' lives.³³
- Develop small learning communities to create a personalized environment, including theme-based and career-based communities and separate ninth-grade academies.^{20,27}
- Use career and technical education to do more than engage unmotivated students and introduce them to career options. Better-performing countries combine work and learning to address the needs of struggling young people. These countries have expanded career-technical education from a blue-collar focus to include white-collar occupations and those requiring sophisticated technical skills needed in the 21st century workplace.²⁸
- Offer flexibility in terms of in terms of time, credits, and graduation.²¹
- Alternative models include early college high schools, theme-based schools (with STEM and high-quality career focuses), well-designed small schools, computerized virtual schools, and schools with special hours for working students.¹⁰

Program examples: Career Academies, Columbus Virtual Credit Advancement Program, First Things First, Improved Solutions for Urban Systems, Middle College High Schools, Project GRAD, Talent Development High School, Talent Search, Twelve Together

Connect students with *comprehensive systems of academic, social, and personal support*

To succeed in and stay connected with school, many students need extra supports in and out of school. These supports include a combination of wraparound services, mentors, tutors, adult advocates, and high-quality after-school and summer programs. These supports need to be coordinated with each other and linked with the student's school experience. There must be enough support providers with sufficient capacity so every student can obtain the adult and peer guidance needed to graduate, prepared for college, work, and life.³⁰

- Academic support: Implement adult/peer tutoring programs at times convenient for students. Provide individual or small group support in test-taking skills, study skills, time management, or targeted subject areas such as reading, writing, or math. Provide extra study time and opportunities for credit recovery and accumulation through after school, Saturday school, or summer enrichment programs.^{20,52}
- Social support: Institute a peer mentoring system or buddy system. Assign socially skilled, academically successful mentors to support and coach at-risk students. Develop a helping culture and encourage peer support within the school.⁵²
- Caring adults: A comprehensive study in the Dallas Independent School District found that the single most important factor predicting student persistence to high school graduation was the presence of an adult who supported the student and his or her quest to earn a high school diploma.³⁵ Assign adult monitors or advocates to identified

at-risk students to track progress and follow up with parents. Strengthen the skills and understanding of the adults who affect teens' motivation and ability to stay in school.^{20,35,43,52} For example, Oconee County, S.C., school district hires graduation coaches who give individual attention to students flagged as unlikely to graduate because of poor attendance and test scores.⁵⁵

- Organize national and local nonprofits (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, CIS) that can bring skilled and committed young and older adults, community members, and trained social service providers into the lives of all students in high-needs schools.¹⁰

Program examples: ALAS, AT&T Student Success Centers, Buckeye Ranch, Check & Connect, Communities in Schools, Crittendon Community School, First Things First, Project GRAD, Richmond High School, Rosemont, Talent Development High School, Talent Search, Twelve Together

Support and engage families to improve academic achievement

Research shows that students with involved parents, regardless of family income or background, are more likely to do better in school, graduate from high school, attend college, and find productive work.¹⁰

- Families must be valued as partners with the school and engaged as decision makers and advocates.³⁵
- Parent engagement efforts should be responsive to cultural differences.¹⁰
- Identify a person (e.g., family advocate) in the school with whom parents can feel comfortable communicating their concerns.⁵²
- Offer prompt notification of academic, behavioral, attendance, or other problems; earlier contact throughout middle school and in and beyond ninth grade on what constitutes success in high school; a single point of contact at the school; information on high school graduation and college admission requirements, including financial aid and assistance in negotiating access to college; individualized student plans; homework hotlines; access to learning centers within schools; and flexible schedules for parent-teacher conferences.¹⁰

Program examples: ALAS, Response to Intervention, Richmond High School

Graduation pathways and dropout recovery for out-of-school and under-credited youth

Nationally, there are more than 6 million people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are high school dropouts. Dropout recovery models, such as the U.S. Department of Labor's Job Corps and YouthBuild USA, have had success in re-enrolling dropouts and allowing them to earn a high school diploma or GED while gaining work and community service experience. New York City's Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation has achieved significant success in returning youth in this age group to the graduation pathway with a combination of learning, work, and personal, academic, and social support systems.¹⁰

- Provide innovative alternative learning environments to engage students who have fallen off the path to high school graduation and reenroll students who have already dropped out of high school to place them on a pathway to postsecondary success.¹⁰

Program examples: Improved Solutions for Urban Systems, New York City’s Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, WinWin Academy, YouthBuild

Leverage community supports and systems

The decision to drop out is multifaceted and includes circumstances beyond schools. In order for other strategies to work, it is necessary to improve communication, coordination, and quality across systems serving youth so that they work together to address the challenges faced by each child and family in a comprehensive manner.⁵⁰

- Mobilize a web of community resources such as after-school enrichment, youth development, family support, health and mental health, parenting skills and adult education, and more.⁵⁰
- States and school districts that have made the most progress built multisector collaborations that have included significant involvement and support from governors, mayors, legislators, nonprofits, business, and community organizations.¹⁰

Program examples: Communities in Schools, Richmond High School

Whole School/Systemic Reform

“Getting and keeping all young people engaged in learning and on track to graduate from high school ready for college and the 21st century workplace is going to require wider, deeper, and more systemic change.”^{30, p.11}

- Transform or replace low-performing middle and high schools (dropout factories).³⁰ A number of districts, including New York City, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Atlanta, and Oakland, have worked to systematically increase student choice and replace large low graduation rate high schools with smaller and more focused secondary schools, often in partnership with external reform or support organizations.¹⁰
- Organizational and structural reforms that make middle and high school more personalized. Students benefit from experiences that demonstrate the connection between school and their future goals, and from efforts that promote student involvement, active learning, and adult support for a manageable number of students.¹¹
- Instructional, curricular, and assessment reforms—backed by sufficient and appropriate extra help — that enable all students to succeed in college and workplace preparation classes, and that reflect a connection to real-world activities.¹¹
- Leadership reforms that distribute key leadership responsibilities to multiple adults in the school and rethink staff and administrator responsibilities.¹¹

Program examples: Communities in Schools, New York City Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation

Tailor responses to the needs of youth, schools, and communities

It can be counterproductive to rush into scaling up interventions that have made an impact in a few places, “without carefully analyzing the conditions that make success possible. Too often, good ideas are applied in the wrong places. And no single approach—or particular combination of federal, state, and local participation—will work for every low graduation-rate high school.”^{9, p.16}

Program Descriptions

Accelerated middle schools are self-contained academic programs designed to help middle school students who are behind grade level catch up with their age peers by covering core academic curriculum at an accelerated pace. The programs give students who are one to two years behind grade level the opportunity to cover an additional year of curriculum during their 1-2 years in the program. Accelerated middle schools can be structured as separate schools or as schools within a traditional middle school. Classes are often linked thematically across multiple subjects. Instruction is more experiential and "hands on" than is typical in a traditional middle school. The programs generally offer smaller classes than traditional middle schools and provide additional academic and social supports, such as tutoring, attendance monitoring, counseling, and family outreach.²⁰

Academic Acceleration Academy, a model program identified by the National Dropout Prevention Center, this dropout intervention and recovery school emphasizes credit flexibility over Carnegie Units as a primary unit of measurement for credit attainment. Credit flexibility assumes that students are developing skills to master the academic content, and enhance competencies beyond what is typically expected in a traditional classroom. Students at AAA are provided numerous opportunities to extend their learning through creative and innovative projects that challenge student intellect to solve complex problems with real-life practical solutions. <http://academic-acceleration.com/>

Achievement for Latinos with Academic Success [ALAS (Spanish for "wings")] is an intervention for middle and high school students that is designed to address student, school, family, and community factors that affect dropping out. Each student is assigned a counselor/mentor who monitors attendance, behavior, and academic achievement. The counselor/mentor provides feedback and coordinates interventions and resources to students, families, and teachers. Counselors/mentors also serve as advocates for students and intervene when problems are identified. Students are trained in problem-solving, self-control, and assertiveness skills. Parents are trained in parent-child problem solving, how to participate in school activities, and how to contact teachers and school administrators to address issues. ALAS serves students identified as at risk of dropping out because of low academic performance and behavior problems. The intervention consists of six related strategies: monitor attendance, improve student social and task-related problem-solving skills, provide feedback from teachers to parents and students, teach parents how to participate in schools and how to manage their child's behavior, provide recognition and bonding activities, and connect students and families with community services.²⁰ http://raiseinspiredkids.com/alas_program/index.php

AT&T Student Success Centers. The Student Success Centers focus on serving high-risk ninth graders with specialized mentoring, intensive counseling services, career/college advisement, and academic and study skills training. Under the direction of co-directors James L. Moore III and Collette Dollarhide, graduate students in the Counselor Education program of the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University work with the ninth-grade high school students at two Columbus City Schools, Linden-McKinley and South High, using research-based programs to encourage scholastic development and increase graduation rates. The graduate students benefit as they fulfill the field experience requirements for their school

counseling master's degrees. The ninth graders gain through the targeted intervention documented to yield academic success, higher test scores, and improved behavior. By year three of the program, the grant expects to serve as many as 100 students at each school.

Buckeye Ranch. The Cross Creek School (Day Treatment Program) helps youth who are struggling in traditional school settings. Students have the ability to transition to their home school districts with clinical support and services. The Buckeye Ranch also supports Alum Crest High School in Columbus Public Schools with case management and counseling services. Students with emotional disturbances are placed at Alum Crest by Columbus Public Schools.

Career Academies are school-within-school programs operating in high schools. They offer career-related curricula based on a career theme, academic coursework, and work experience through partnerships with local employers. Career Academies have broadened the kinds of students they serve, consistent with efforts to integrate rigorous academic curricula with career themes and to attract students who are preparing for post-secondary education. Career Academies operate within a larger high school and are guided by a career theme such as health care, finance, technology, communications, and public service. Students take their career-related courses within the Academy, which often are taught by the core team of Academy teachers. Some Academies integrate their courses with other academic subjects required for graduation. Career Academies also partner with local employers, who provide internship opportunities and mentoring to students, contribute resources, participate in special events, and serve on Academy advisory boards.²⁰

Check & Connect is a dropout prevention strategy that relies on close monitoring of school performance, as well as mentoring, case management, and other supports. The program has two main components: "Check" and "Connect." The Check component is designed to continually assess student engagement through close monitoring of student performance and progress indicators. The Connect component involves program staff giving individualized attention to students, in partnership with school personnel, family members, and community service providers. Students enrolled in Check & Connect are assigned a "monitor" who regularly reviews their performance (in particular, whether students are having attendance, behavior, or academic problems) and intervenes when problems are identified. The monitor also advocates for students, coordinates services, provides ongoing feedback and encouragement, and emphasizes the importance of staying in school. Check & Connect was developed by the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota, as a partnership of researchers, practitioners, parents, and students.²⁰ <http://checkandconnect.org/>

Columbus Virtual Credit Advancement Program. Columbus City Schools offers the opportunity to complete high school diploma requirements online. Eligible students must live in the district and be 21 or younger but not earned enough credits to graduate. Computer access for coursework is provided at many Columbus Metropolitan Library locations and community centers.

http://www.columbus.k12.oh.us/website.nsf/%28ccs_pages%29/Schools_HS_Websites?opendocument

Communities in Schools works inside school systems with superintendents, principals, educators, graduation coaches, and other personnel, and forges community partnerships that

bring resources into schools and help remove barriers to learning. The CIS model is implemented throughout the school year by a CIS site team led by a trained site coordinator who works with school staff to identify students at risk of not graduating, assesses school and student needs, and establishes relationships with local businesses, social service agencies, health care providers, and parent and volunteer organizations to harness needed resources. The primary components and processes of the CIS model include an annual needs assessment; planning with school leadership; delivery of whole-school and targeted, case, evidence-based services; regular monitoring and adjustment of plans; evaluation of effectiveness in achieving school and student goals; and reporting. The combination of whole-school and targeted services as well as the focus on prevention and intervention from pre-K through 12th grade may explain the model's success in lowering dropout rates and increasing on-time graduation. A 5-year evaluation concluded that the CIS model resulted in the strongest reduction in dropout rates of any existing fully scaled dropout prevention program that has been evaluated; it has an effect on both reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates; the model is effective across states, school settings, grade levels, and ethnicities; and the more fully and carefully the model is implemented, the stronger the effects.¹⁵

Diplomas Now, a school turnaround model organized around early warning data, combines the Talent Development secondary school transformation model with Communities in Schools and City Year, two organizations that provide community-based supports and interventions for off-track students in middle and high schools. Diplomas Now is currently working in 10 large city school districts and will expand to 60 more schools. Early results show significant declines in absenteeism, poor behavior, and course failure.¹⁰ <http://diplomasnow.org/>

Directions for Youth & Families Crittenton Community School. A tuition-free charter school for students in grades 6 to 9 who run the risk of failing or dropping out. Students work through their difficulties with one-on-one teaching time, using alternative learning methods individualized to each student. Families can refer their student, or they may be referred by an outside source. Parents can request more information by filling out the online inquiry form. <http://www.crittentonfs.org/crittenton-community-school.html>

Early College High Schools, an accelerated and compressed high school program, combined with a head start on college, can both help low-income, at-risk students stay engaged in high school and launch them on a successful postsecondary trajectory. Across the nation, 47,000 students, many of whom are low-income, attend early colleges. These schools blend high school and college to compress the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first 2 years of college. Students can earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree or up to 2 years of credit toward a bachelor's degree. Early college graduation rates well exceed the national average (92% compared to 69%); college-going rates of early college graduates, most of whom are low income, also exceed the national average (86% compared to 66% among high schools nationally).⁴⁵ <http://www.earlycolleges.org/>

Franklin County Early College High Schools:

Columbus Africentric Early College (CAEC), <http://www.columbusafricentric.com/CAEC.html>

Metro Early College High School, <http://www.themetroschool.com/>

The Charles School at Ohio Dominican University, <http://www.thecharlesschool.org>

Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center (ERS) in Estes Park, Colorado, enrolls only students who have dropped out of school. Eagle Rock was established to reengage students in learning and help them graduate. Because there are no grade levels, students do not move from grade to grade. There are also no grades, as in marks of quality; proficiency is expected of every student. Students graduate when they demonstrate that they have met five expectations: expanding their knowledge base, communicating effectively, creating and making healthy life choices, engaging as a global citizen, and practicing leadership for justice.²¹
<http://www.eaglerockschool.org/>

First Things First is a whole school reform that brings together five core strategies for transforming the school experience for secondary students: strengthening instruction, effective use of data, personalized learning communities, advocating for students and families, and building system capacity to strengthen and sustain reform. First Things First reduces class sizes in language arts and mathematics classes and reorganizes schools into “small learning communities” of up to 350 students and their teachers. Each student is assigned a faculty advisor who serves as a liaison between the school and the student’s family. First Things First helps schools to set clear academic standards that are reflected in assessments that are administered regularly to measure student progress.²⁰ <http://www.irre.org/about-first-things-first>

Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS) in Dayton, Ohio, enrolls youth ages 16-22, many of whom are returning high school dropouts, over age for grade level, and lacking in basic skills. ISUS combines rigorous academics and occupational skills with youth development and community development. Students earn a high school diploma, college credits, and nationally recognized skill certifications. ISUS offers students three career tracks: residential construction, advanced manufacturing/computer technology, and health care. The students alternate between academic and technical instruction and hands-on work experience.
<http://www.isusinc.com>

Middle College High Schools are alternative high schools on college campuses that aim to help at-risk students complete high school and encourage them to attend college. The schools offer a project-centered, interdisciplinary curriculum, with an emphasis on team teaching, individual attention, and development of critical thinking skills. Students are also offered support services such as counseling, peer support, and career experience opportunities.²⁰ <http://www.mcnc.us/>
Franklin County: The Charles School at Ohio Dominican University, <http://www.mcnc.us/our-schools/?state=OH&id=31>

New York City Department of Education Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation oversees 30 "transfer high schools" designed for students who are over age and undercredited or have dropped out of school and 22 "Young Adult Borough Centers" (YABCs) that are organized around evening academic programs for students who might be considering dropping out. These schools offer a more individualized and personable education experience, flexible course scheduling and/or nontraditional school hours along with more support programs for students such as child care for teen parents. The "transfer" high schools and YABCs are embedded in a district-wide, systemic effort to address the dropout problem. Full-day and part-time GED programs form a third component. The Learning to Work (LTW) Initiative adds wrap-around

support services at schools and programs in the Multiple Pathways portfolio.⁴⁹
http://www.nyc.gov/html/ceo/downloads/pdf/appendixb_multiplepathways.pdf

Ohio High School Transformation Initiative (OHSTI), conducted by KnowledgeWorks created 73 new small high schools in 11 urban districts across the state – schools that were shaped by practices drawn from the best research available, deep involvement by their communities, and extensive professional development to help educators put new ideas into practice. Within 3 years, the graduation rates in OHSTI schools had increased by more than 31% and nearly 90% of schools reported improved test scores in both reading and math.

<http://www.ohioeducationmatters.org/reinventing-public-education/new-models-high-school/ohio-high-school-transformation-initiative>

Project “Graduation Really Achieves Dreams” (GRAD) offers high school students summer institutes and the prospect of 4-year college scholarships to promote attending and completing high school. Each Project GRAD school has a scholarship coordinator who provides counseling, tutoring, and college admission preparation. Project GRAD also works with the feeder elementary and middle schools to address early problems by implementing an instructional discipline management system into the curriculum.²⁰

http://www.mdrc.org/project_28_16.html

Ohio examples:

Akron, <http://www.projectgradakron.org>; Cincinnati,

<http://www.projectgradusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=hrLRK4PGLmF&b=783545>; Lorain,

<http://www.projectgradlorain.org/>

Reagan High School, Austin, TX. A principal turned around a school with a predominantly Hispanic and black student body and multiple years of academically unacceptable ratings with the following measures: cleaned-up data system used for credit monitoring, time-to-graduation tracking, and attendance monitoring; revamped after-school tutoring program; language academy for English language learners; ninth-grade academy; relationships with middle school feeders; summer credit recovery program, and early college high school.¹⁹

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multitiered approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. Educational decisions about the intensity and duration of interventions are based on individual student response to instruction. For RTI implementation to work well, the following essential components must be implemented with fidelity and in a rigorous manner: high-quality, research-based instruction, ongoing student assessment, tiered instruction, and parent involvement. <http://www.rtinetwork.org>,

<http://www.nasdse.org/Projects/ResponsetoInterventionRtlProject/tabid/411/Default.aspx>

The RTI state database provides information about implementation in Cincinnati Public Schools: http://state.rti4success.org/index.php?option=com_state&stateId=139

Richmond High School (Indiana). After RHS was named a dropout factory, members of the community developed a heightened sense of urgency to improve the educational outcomes of

its students. New initiatives began as well at the county and school levels, and across sectors. The high school adopted a trimester schedule with longer school periods, giving students more opportunities for credits during the regular school day and year, reducing transitions during the school day, and increasing the likelihood of establishing adult/student relationships. A ninth-grade academy was established and entering ninth graders make a commitment to graduate 4 years later. A mentoring effort for struggling students, primarily ninth graders, has engaged hundreds of trained mentors, drawn from the ranks of high school seniors and community members. An intensive credit recovery initiative is effective in getting students back on track. A small alternative school is available for students who choose a smaller learning environment and for those who must work, learn, and parent simultaneously. An Early College Prep Academy in the middle school feeders requires parent participation.¹⁰

Rosemont Center Eagle Heights Academy. Provides schooling for students who have severe emotional and behavioral difficulties. The goal is to reintegrate the majority of youth back into a traditional school setting. However, males ages 16 to 18 who are unable to return to a traditional school setting can get help in preparing for the GED. Families can refer themselves or receive a referral from another agency. http://rosemont.org/partial_hospital.php

The **Talent Development High School** model includes both structural and curriculum reforms. It calls for schools to reorganize into small learning communities—including ninth-grade academies and career academies for students in upper grades. It also emphasizes high academic standards and provides all students with a college preparatory academic sequence.²⁰ <http://web.jhu.edu/CSOS/tdhs/index.html>

Talent Search aims to help low-income and first-generation college students complete high school and gain access to college through a combination of services designed to improve academic achievement and increase access to financial aid. Services include test-taking and study-skills assistance, academic advising, tutoring, career development, college campus visits, and financial aid application assistance.²⁰ <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/triotalent/index.html>

Tennessee: Beginning in 2003, the Urban Education Improvement Program targeted assistance to the five major urban districts that account for half of the state's economically disadvantaged students and 75 percent of African American students. Coaching support for struggling schools was increased through a newly established Office of Achievement Gap Elimination (AGE) and a system of Exemplary Educators (nearly 100 now) that helped districts use data to improve school management, teaching, and learning. An Achievement School District that is run by the state has been set up for the 13 lowest-performing high schools, including some of those in Memphis and Nashville. It will draw upon the strengths of major nonprofit partners, new leaders, and dedicated teachers. Eighteen schools (Renewal Schools) will be required to adopt a proven reform model. Schools with persistently low performance will be required to implement one of four turnaround models. The 114 schools newly entering the accountability continuum will be designated Focus Schools and receive support from Exemplary Educators, the AGE consultants, and the targeted assistance teams.¹⁰

<http://www.tn.gov/education/accountability/urbaned2.shtml>;

<http://www.tn.gov/education/accountability/age.shtml>;

<http://www.tn.gov/education/accountability/exemplaryeducator.shtml>

Twelve Together is a 1-year peer support and mentoring program for middle and early high school students that offers weekly after school discussion groups led by trained adult facilitators. The program also offers homework assistance, which is typically provided by college students, and trips to local college campuses.²⁰

WinWin Academy is a reentry model high school that applies academics as it nurtures students' senses of Belonging, Generosity, Mastery, and Independence—the Pillars-4-Success. The Pillars-4-Success are integrated with academic content areas and the school's ethos. Each Pillar is achieved through the application of Ohio's Academic Achievement Standards. Being developed with funding from Ohio's Race to the Top grant, the program is for 18- to 22-year old males and females under the supervision of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction who are interested reclaiming their education and the direction of their lives. The program features Thinking Aides who will serve as mentors and life-coaches and a digital student information system to track student performance, assess instruction efficacy, and factor into professional development and other continuous improvement activities. <http://www.winwinacademy.org/>

Youth Build Columbus Community School. A dropout recovery high school serving youth ages 17 to 21 who are in need of a high school diploma and want to learn a skilled trade, YouthBuild offers low-income youth both education and job training services. YouthBuild's education component emphasizes attaining a GED or high school diploma, typically in alternative schools with small class sizes and an emphasis on individualized instruction. It is targeted to youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are from low-income families and who have demonstrated educational need, typically by being high school dropouts. Participants spend 6 months to 2 years in the program. During this time, they alternate weeks between being full-time students and working full-time in the job-training program. Throughout the program, youth participate in counseling, peer support groups, and life-planning exercises that are intended to encourage them to overcome negative habits and pursue life goals.

<http://www.youthbuild.org/site/c.htIRI3PIKoG/b.1223921/k.BD3C/Home.htm>

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Additional Resources

Alliance for Excellent Education: The High School Crisis,
http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_information/ohio

Alliance for Excellent Education: High Schools in the United States: How does your local high school measure up? (Promoting Power Database),
http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_and_local_ipromotingpower/results?sort=asc&order=County&searchtype=bystate&bystate=OH&submitstate=Go&bystatedist=&district=&path=/&submitstatedist=Go&byzip=&submitzip=Go&form_id=promotingpower_search_for_m

America's Promise, <http://www.americaspromise.org/Our-Work/Dropout-Prevention.aspx>

Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University. Ohio's Index, Charts and Graphs,
<http://www.every1graduates.org/ohio.html>

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MDRC Career Academies, http://www.mdrc.org/project_29_1.html

Middle College National Consortium, <http://www.mcnc.us/>

National Dropout Prevention Center, <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/>

National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, <http://www.ndpc-sd.org/>

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http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_DropoutPrevention_052507.pdf

National Middle School Association, 4151 Executive Parkway, Suite 300, Westerville, OH 43081, (614) 895-4730, <http://www.nmsa.org>

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Reconnecting Youth Prevention Program, <http://www.reconnectingyouth.com/ry/>

U.S. Department of Education Doing What Works, http://dww.ed.gov/Dropout-Prevention/topic/index.cfm?T_ID=24

U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse, <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/topicarea.aspx?tid=06>

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Selected Franklin County Programs

Academic Acceleration Academy

A model program identified by the National Dropout Prevention Center, this dropout intervention and recovery schools emphasizes credit flexibility over Carnegie Units as a primary unit of measurement for credit attainment. Credit flexibility assumes that students are developing skills to master the academic content, and enhance competencies beyond what is typically expected in a traditional classroom. Students at AAA are provided numerous opportunities to extend their learning through creative and innovative projects that challenge student intellect to solve complex problems with real-life practical solutions.

1990 Jefferson Ave., Columbus, OH 43211-2175

(614) 298-4742

<http://www.academic-acceleration.com>

http://www.dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms/show_program.php?pid=211

AT&T Student Success Centers

The Student Success Centers focus on serving high-risk ninth graders with specialized mentoring, intensive counseling services, career/college advisement, and academic and study skills training. Under the direction of co-directors James L. Moore III and Collette Dollarhide, graduate students in the Counselor Education program of the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University work with the ninth-grade high school students at two Columbus City Schools, Linden-McKinley and South High, using research-based programs to encourage scholastic development and increase graduation rates. The graduate students benefit as they fulfill the field experience requirements for their school counseling master's degrees. The ninth graders gain through the targeted intervention documented to yield academic success, higher test scores, and improved behavior. By year three of the program, the grant expects to serve as many as 100 students at each school.

James L. Moore, III, (614) 688-4294, moore.1408@osu.edu

Collette Dollarhide, (614) 688-5938, dollarhide.1@osu.edu
<http://ehe.osu.edu/news/2008/counselor-ed-att-grant.php>

Buckeye Ranch

The Cross Creek School (Day Treatment Program) helps youth who are struggling in traditional school settings. Students have the ability to transition to their home school districts with clinical support and services. The Buckeye Ranch also supports Alum Crest High School in Columbus Public Schools with case management and counseling services. Students with emotional disturbances are placed at Alum Crest by Columbus Public Schools.

2865 West Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43204
(614) 384-8000 or (614) 384-7798
www.buckeyeranch.org

COHHIO Youth Empowerment Program (YEP)

Provides helpful information for homeless youth about school, teenage shelters, and resources for children facing expulsion.

175 South Third Street, Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 280-1984
www.cohhioyep.org/homeless.html

Columbus City Schools Adult & Community Education (ACE)

Provides hundreds of online courses, as well as traditional classroom programs at many locations throughout Franklin County. They offer literacy, GED, ESOL and certified career training programs. The Project Connect program ensures the educational rights of youth in Central Ohio who are experiencing homelessness.

2323 Lexington Avenue, Columbus, OH 43211
(614) 365-6000
www.cpsadulced.org

Columbus Virtual Credit Advancement Program

Columbus City Schools offers the opportunity to complete high school diploma requirements online. Eligible students must live in the district and be 21 or younger but not earned enough credits to graduate. Computer access for coursework is provided at many Columbus Metropolitan Library locations and community centers.

100 East Arcadia Avenue, Columbus, OH 43202
(614) 365-5485
http://www.columbus.k12.oh.us/website.nsf/%28ccs_pages%29/Schools_HS_Websites?opendocument

Communities in Schools of Central Ohio

Helps children in Columbus and Whitehall City Schools stay in school and graduate through a variety of programs including peer mentoring, health resources and after school learning.

510 East North Broadway, Columbus, OH 43214

(614) 268-2472, ext. 11
www.ciskids.org

Directions for Youth & Families Crittenton Community School

A tuition-free charter school for students in grades 6 to 9 who run the risk of failing or dropping out. Students work through their difficulties with one-on-one teaching time, using alternative learning methods individualized to each student. Families can refer their student, or they may be referred by an outside source. Parents can request more information by filling out the online inquiry form.

1418 East Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43205
(614) 372-2401
<http://www.crittentonfs.org/crittenton-community-school.html>

Focus Learning Academy

A free public school at three locations in Columbus offers students an alternative to earning their high school diploma, by combining high school academics with a vocational curriculum. Most of the coursework is done online, and students are able to have a flexible schedule to accommodate work schedules.

4480 Refugee Road, Columbus, OH 43232
(614) 322-7990
<http://focuslearn.org>

Pschtecinc High School

Provides students ages 13 to 21 with an 8th to 12th grade educational program. Tuition is free, and students can earn their high school diplomas.

985 Mediterranean Avenue, Columbus, OH 43229
(614) 985-3428
<http://pschtecinc.org>

Rosemont Center Eagle Heights Academy

Provides schooling for students who have severe emotional and behavioral difficulties. The goal is to reintegrate the majority of youth back into a traditional school setting. However, males ages 16 to 18 who are unable to return to a traditional school setting can get help in preparing for the GED. Families can refer themselves or receive a referral from another agency.

2440 Dawnlight Avenue, Columbus, OH 43211
(614) 416-8708
http://rosemont.org/partial_hospital.php

WinWin Academy

A reentry model high school that applies academics as it nurtures students' senses of Belonging, Generosity, Mastery, and Independence—the Pillars-4-Success. The Pillars-4-Success are integrated with academic content areas and the school's ethos. Each Pillar is achieved through the application of Ohio's Academic Achievement Standards. The program is for 18- to

22-year old males and females under the supervision of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction who are interested reclaiming their education and the direction of their lives. The program features Thinking Aides who will serve as mentors and life-coaches and a digital student information system to track student performance, assess instruction efficacy, and factor into professional development and other continuous improvement activities.

4924-C Reed Road, Columbus, OH 43220

(614) 538-2898

<http://www.winwinacademy.org/>

Youth Build Columbus Community School

A dropout recovery high school serving youth ages 17 to 21 who are in need of a high school diploma and want to learn a skilled trade.

1183 Essex Avenue, Columbus, OH 43201

(614) 291-0805

www.youthbuildcolumbus.info

Review by Sandra Kerka

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