

# Designing the Middle Grades for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Robert Balfanz  
Everyone Graduates Center  
Johns Hopkins University

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# Why We Must Meet the Nation's Graduation Challenge

- There is no work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century without a high school diploma and little work to support a family without some post-secondary schooling or training
- This cuts off access to the American Dream, fractures communities, and weakens the nation

# How Big is the Nation's Graduation Challenge?

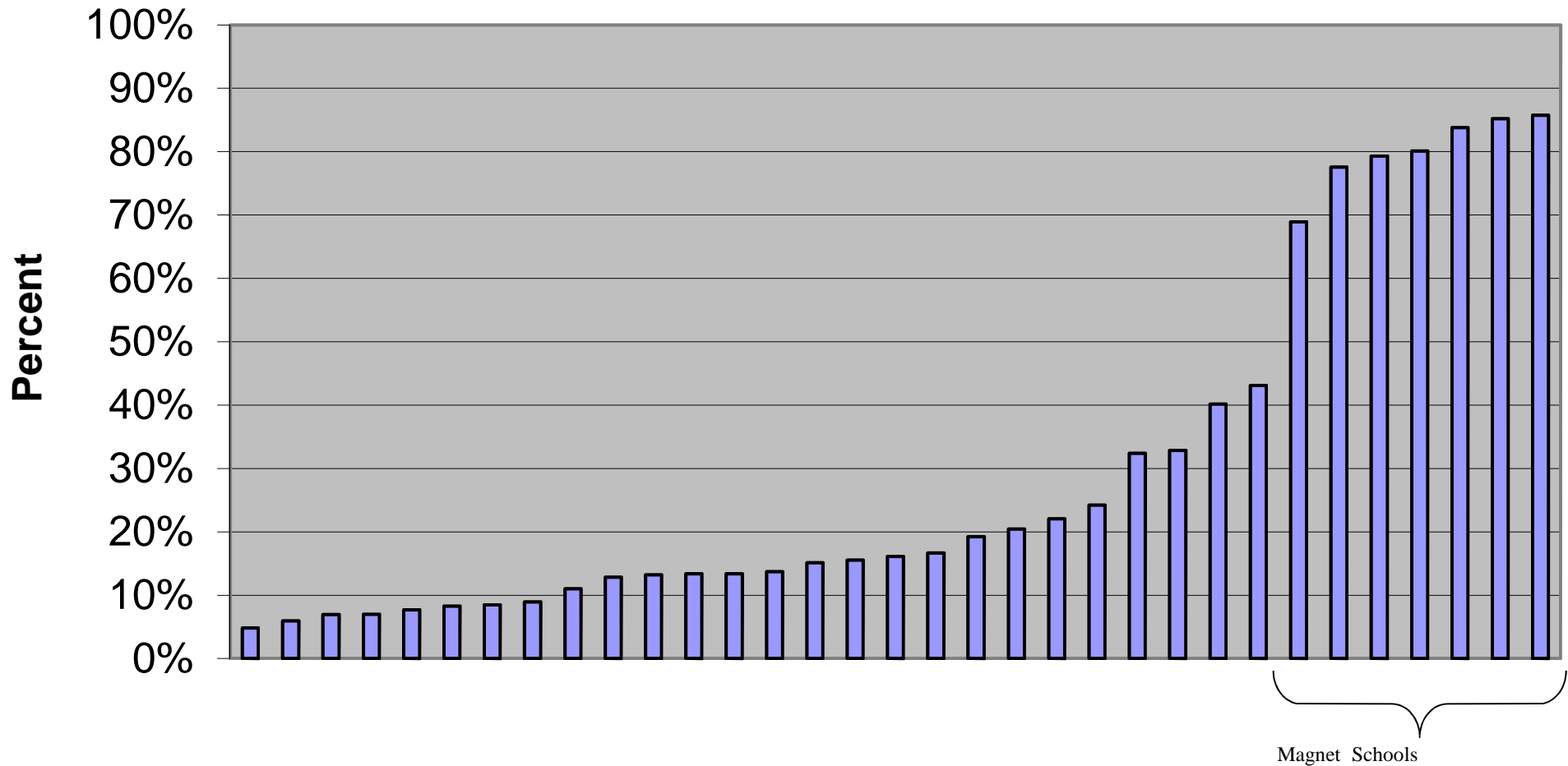
- 4 Million high school students in Class of 2010
- 3 Million will receive diplomas
- 75% Overall Graduation Rate
- 60% Graduation Rate for low income-minority students
- Grad Gap = 1 Million students without high school diplomas
- Nation has gone from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> in 25-34 year olds with college degree

# What is Required to Reach the Goal of Everyone Graduates

- A 90% High School Graduation Rate by 2020 would require 600,000 more graduates in the Class of 2020 than the Class of 2010
- The Class of 2020 is entering the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

What is the Role of the  
Middle Grades  
in Enabling Everyone to  
Graduate High School  
College and Career Ready?

# Percentage of 9th Graders who are On-Age, First Time Freshmen with 80%+ Attendance in 8th Grade and Math and Reading Skills at the 7th Grade Level or Higher by High School in Major City



# Achievement Gaps Can Close or Become Chasms in the Middle Grades

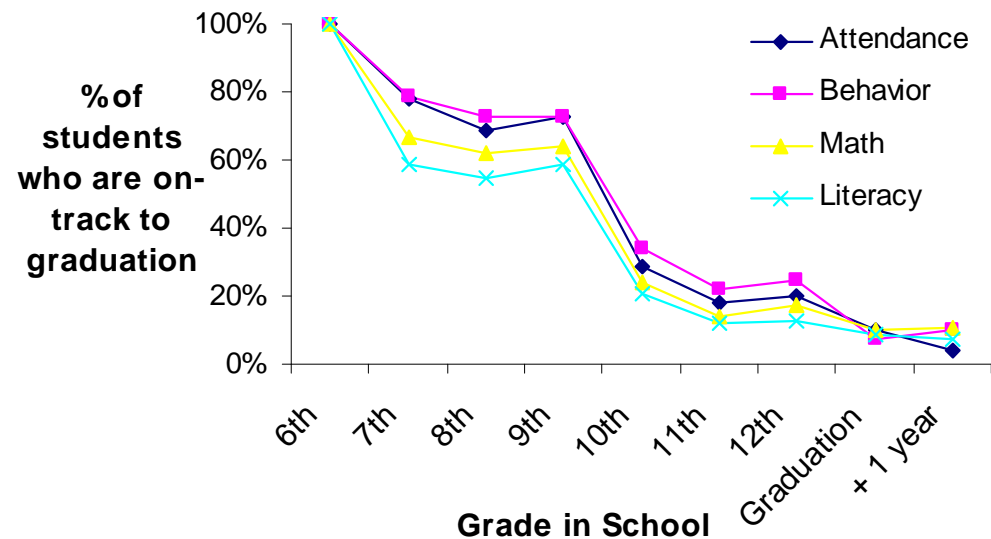
- In one study - 75% of students in high poverty middle grade schools in a major city, who had a strong teacher two out of three years, came to school 95% of time, did not get in trouble, and higher than average levels of efforts made considerable progress in closing math achievement gaps
- Only 28% of students across three schools studied closely achieved these conditions

# For Half or More of Eventual Dropouts the Path to Exiting School Without a Diploma Begins as Early as the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

## *The Primary Off-Track Indicators for Potential Dropouts:*

- **A**ttendance - < 85-90% school attendance
- **B**ehavior - “unsatisfactory” behavior mark in at least one class
- **C**ourse Performance – A final grade of “F” in Math and/or English or Credit-Bearing High School Course

*Sixth Graders (1996-97) with an  
Early Warning Indicator*

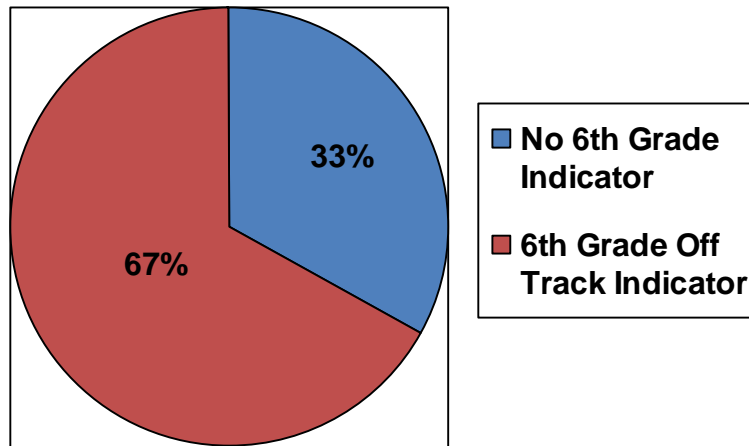


Sixth-grade students with one or more of the indicators may have only a **15% to 25% chance of graduating** from high school on time or within one year of expected graduation

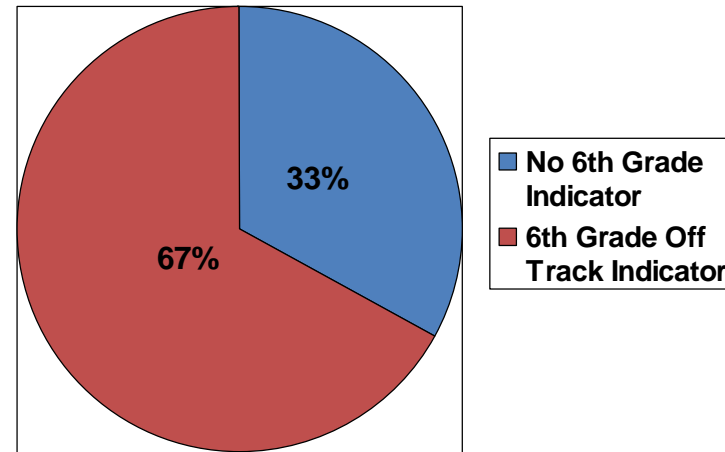
*Note: Early Warning Indicator graph from Philadelphia research which has been replicated in 10 cities.  
Robert Balfanz and Liza Herzog, Johns Hopkins University; Philadelphia Education Fund*

# School Disengagement in Middle Grades Precedes Involvement with the Juvenile Justice System and Teenage Pregnancy

**Males Incarcerated in High  
School-Philadelphia**



**Females Who Give Birth in  
High School-Philadelphia**



# Disengagement and Withdrawal From Schooling Can Become so Great in the Middle Grades that Students Have Almost No Chance for Post-Secondary Attainment

- Sneak Peak - from Forthcoming Report on Chronic Absenteeism - in a major state, 20,000 students missed a half year or more of schooling between 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade - and had a 3% enrollment rate in the State University System
- California just announced that approximately 17,000 students a year dropout before they reach high school

# Post-Secondary Success Appears to be Strongly Related to a Strong 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Year

- Sneak Peak-from Forthcoming Report on Post-Secondary Success Indicators with Alliance for Excellent Education
- “In a major state to have a 75% chance of post-secondary attainment - 9<sup>th</sup> graders needed to attend 95% of the time, have a B average, no course failures, no behavioral incidents, and be on age for grade. Only 20% of the cohort reached these milestones”

# Fate of the Republic Rests with the Nation's 11, 12 & 13 Year Olds



# What Can Be Done?

Focus on Building Academic  
Knowledge and Academic  
Behaviors in the Middle Grade-or

The Common Core Plus

# There is Good Evidence Based Source Material for Middle Grades 1.0 for 21<sup>st</sup> Century




- Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Learning
- ED Source Middle Grades Reports and Tools
- SREB Middle Grades
- NASSP Breaking Ranks in the Middle
- NMSA
- Bush Institute Middle Grades Matters

In Highest Needs Middle Grade  
Schools Combine Whole School  
Transformation with Enhanced  
Student and Teacher Supports

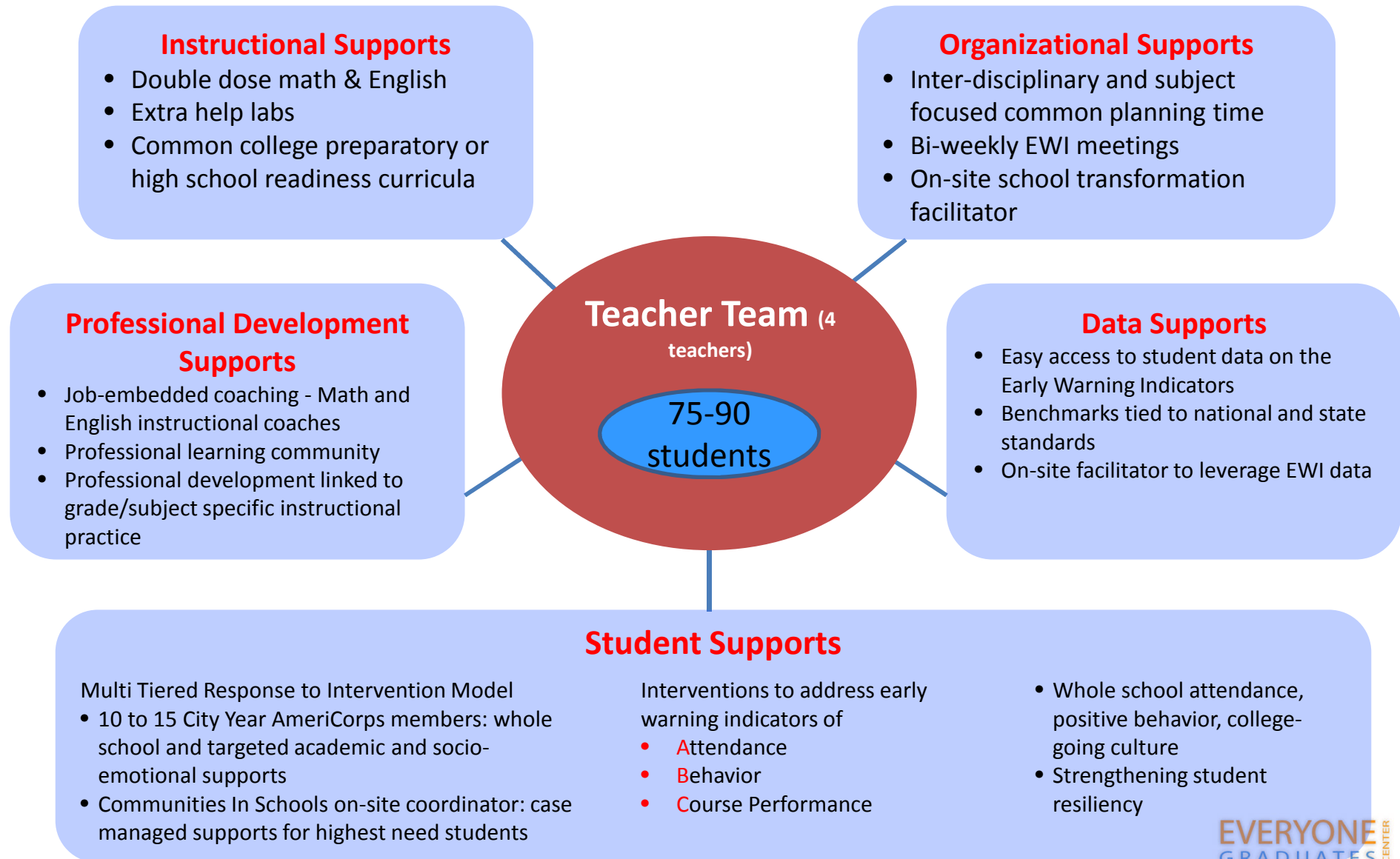
## The Diplomas Now partners harness and combine their unique assets to keep students on track college and career ready

### On-Track Indicator and Intervention System:

- Research-based and validated interventions of increasing intensity are employed until student is back on track to graduation. Interventions are constantly evaluated for their effectiveness.

	Core Function	Means and Methods	Additional Roles
	Whole School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research based instructional, organizational and teacher support</li> <li>• On-track indicator data system</li> <li>• On-site implementation and mission building support</li> <li>• Scheduling, Staffing, and Budget supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra Academic Supports</li> <li>• Extra Behavior Supports</li> <li>• National Training and Tech Assistance Partner (Phil. Ed. Fund)</li> </ul>
	Targeted Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-School, Whole-Child program</li> <li>• 8-15 full-time, full-day corps members serving as near-peer role models to mentor, tutor, provide behavior and attendance coaching and extended day learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive School Climate</li> <li>• Service Learning</li> <li>• After School</li> </ul>
	Intensive Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-based professional Site Coordinator</li> <li>• Highly specialized and intensive interventions via case managed student supports and referral to outside agencies</li> <li>• Brokered services through CIS partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Episodic Whole School Prevention Supports</li> </ul>

# The Diplomas Now Model

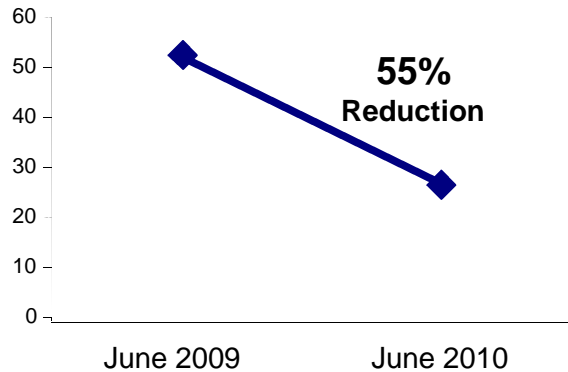


# Diplomas Now Sample Results: Philadelphia Middle Schools

Diplomas Now partnered with three Philadelphia high poverty middle schools in 2009-2010. These schools average 615 students, 84% of whom are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch. Below are the aggregate results for all three schools from the 2009-10 School year.

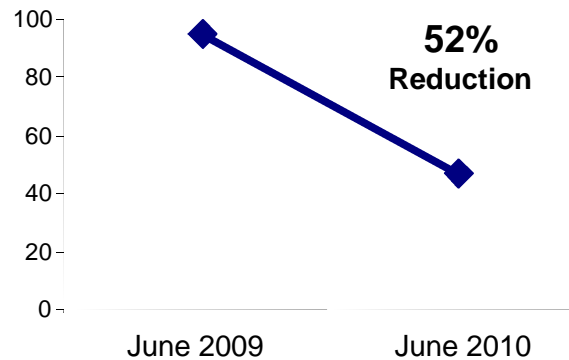
## Attendance

*# of Students with less than 80% Attendance*



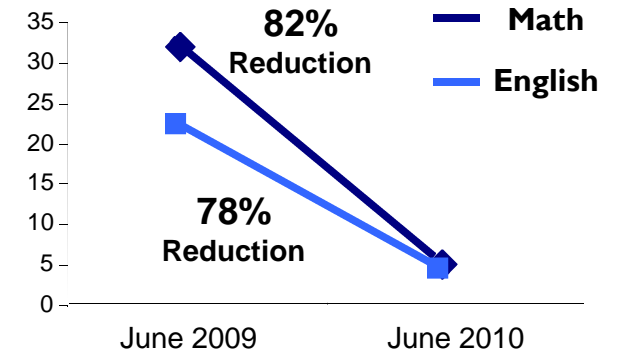
## Behavior

*# of Students with 3 or more negative behavior marks*



## Course Performance

*# of Students receiving an F in Math or English*



# Link Early Warning Data to Tiered Interventions

- Findings from Forthcoming report-On Track to Success on current state of Early Warning Systems by Civic Enterprises and Everyone Graduates Center
- Focus on effective intervention, not just identification
- Need to be able to respond to the first signs that a student is falling off track
- Systematically apply school-wide preventative, targeted and the intensive interventions until students is on-track
- Recognize and build on student strengths
- Provide time, training, and support to teachers
- Match resources to student needs but practice intervention discipline
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Remember you can get started with the data in your school

# Early Warning Indicator Data Tool

- Without additional support to provide interventions at the scale and intensity required to meet each student's individual needs, teachers can easily feel overwhelmed
- Research has shown that when teachers feel overwhelmed by the level of challenge in high needs schools, they will often lower expectations for students

Student	Attendance				Behavior Comments		Math Grades		Literacy Grades		Assessments		
	07-08: Days Absent	08-09: Days Absent	07-08: Att.%	08-09: Att.%	Dec	Mar	Dec	Mar	Dec	Mar	Reading Grade Level	Math PSSA 2008	Literacy PSSA 2008
<b>A</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>Below Basic</b>	<b>Basic</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>Below Basic</b>	<b>Below Basic</b>

# Focus on the ABC's-Attendance

- Measure chronic absenteeism-students who miss 20 or more days
- Create programming that compels students to come to school - e.g. most engaged middle grades students often found in cognitively rich activities which combine teamwork with performance (Robotics, debate, drama, chess etc.)
- Build attendance problem solving capacity within schools and in partnership with other agencies and community organizations

# Focus on ABC's-Behavior and Effort

- Model and teach resiliency and self-management/organization skills
- Model and teach staying out of trouble skills
- Build Success Scripts in student's heads (effort leads to success), work to undermine Failure Scripts (success is capricious, withholding effort keeps you psychologically safe)

# Focus on ABC's- Course Performance

- Provide course coaching-assistance, support, and on occasion even advocacy which enables students to succeed in their courses-including monitoring assignment completion, and preparation for tests and quizzes, and help with catching up when absent
- Make sure tutoring efforts are linked tightly with needs and expectations of student's courses- (don't work on fractions, if Friday's test is on probability)

# Focus on ABC's – Policy

- Schools and communities need to measure and act on chronic absenteeism-the number of students who miss a month or more of school (also measure those who miss a week or less)
- Schools and communities need positive behavior support programs and alternatives to suspensions and may need to re-examine their disciplinary policies
- Schools and communities need effective second chance and credit recovery programs which hold students accountable but provide a reason for them to keep trying
- Need to measure students who dropout of school before high school
- Need to incentivize the spread and use of Early Warning and Intervention Systems

# Lay the Groundwork for Middle Grades 2.0 for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

# Middle Grades 2.0

- Middle Grades provide the opportunity for substantial innovation
- In order to achieve major gains in high school graduation and post-secondary attainment will need to change how students and teachers work in the middle grades
- Need to increase student effort and teacher effectiveness

# Core Focus on

- Reading, Writing, Reasoning, Math and Science but in the context of cognitively rich learning experiences that engage 11, 12, and 13 year olds

# Fate of the Republic Rests with the Nation's 11, 12 & 13 Year Olds



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# As Well As

- Entrepreneurship, Civic Engagement, Arts
- Intellectual Merit Badges for significant cognitive achievements-e.g. persuasive essay
- Re-work extended school time, so teachers have more time for collaborative work and students have support to complete their coursework and assignments before they leave school

# For more information

- Visit the Everyone Graduates Center website at [www.everyone1graduates.org](http://www.everyone1graduates.org)
- E-mail Robert Balfanz at [rbalfanz@csos.jhu.edu](mailto:rbalfanz@csos.jhu.edu)