

National High School Center Research Studies: Dropout Prevention January 2010

The research pieces included in this document have been vetted using the National High School Center's research review criteria and received a score of 3 or 2, which are ratings reserved for the most rigorous study designs. A score of 3 or 2 indicates more confidence in the researchers' conclusions. Further explanation of the criteria is available at <http://betterhighschools.org/docs/ResearchReviewCriteria09232008.pdf>.

Cobb, B., Sample, P., Alwell, M., & Johns, N. (n.d.). *Effective interventions in dropout prevention: A research synthesis: The effects of cognitive-behavioral interventions on dropout for youth with disabilities*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities. (synthesis)

This synthesis investigated the relationship between cognitive-behavioral interventions and dropout outcomes among youth with a variety of disabilities. The findings show that this type of intervention is associated with the reduction of dropping out.

Link: http://www.ndpc-sd.org/documents/Research_Syntheses/Research_Synthesis_Effects_of_CBI.pdf

Dynarski, M., Gleason, P., Rangaraian, A., & Wood, R. (1998). *Impacts of dropout prevention programs: Final report*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (quantitative study)

This study evaluated 16 dropout programs for middle and high school students under the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program (SDDP). Analysis and discussion mostly focus on the aggregate impact of programs on middle schools or high schools, rather than on specific programs. The study found that middle school programs had a significant effect in reducing dropout only if they were implemented with high intensity. The programs, regardless of intensity, did not have an impact on student learning (e.g., grades, test scores). The high school programs, however, did not have an impact on reducing dropout, improving other school outcomes (e.g., test scores, grades), or improving social-behavioral outcomes (e.g., reducing pregnancy, increasing self-esteem). Programs that focused on helping students obtain General Educational Development (GED) certificates did have a positive effect.

Link: <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/dod-fr.pdf>

Jacob, B., & Lefgren, L. (2007). *The effect of grade retention on high school completion.* NBER Working Paper No. 13514. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. (quantitative study)

This study uses a regression discontinuity design to examine the long-term effects of grade retention, in the 6th and 8th grade, on the likelihood of dropping out of high school. It was found that 6th grade retention had little effect on the likelihood of dropping or the age at which students drop out. However, retaining students in the 8th grade reduces their probability of completing high school by about 14%, suggesting that grade retention later in a student's academic career may have a greater impact on academic attainment. There was no evidence that grade retention effected the timing of dropping out.

Link: <http://papers.nber.org/papers/w13514>

Kemple, J. J., & Snipes, J. C. (2000). *Career Academies: Impacts on students' engagement and performance in high school.* New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corp. (quantitative study)

This study uses a large-scale, multisite, experimental design to determine the effects of Career Academies on a range of student educational, developmental, and work-related outcomes, including student achievement and student engagement. This report provides information on the implementation of Career Academies. According to this study, Career Academies produce positive results, including improved high school outcomes for students at high risk of dropping out, increased likelihood of graduating on time for students at low risk of dropping out, and increased levels of interpersonal support and participation in career awareness and work-based learning activities. Career Academies did not improve student scores on standardized math and reading achievement tests.

Link: <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/41/full.pdf>

Kemple, J. J., & Willner, C. J. (2008). *Career Academies: Long-term impacts on labor market outcomes, educational attainment, and transitions to adulthood.* New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corp. (quantitative study)

The researchers investigated the effects of participation in Career Academies on the labor market preparation, school-to-work transitions, and other long-term outcomes for young people. The findings suggest that academic learning need not be compromised by career education, and investments in career-preparatory activities for high school students can create significant improvements in long-term outcomes.

Link: <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/482/full.pdf>

Lehr, C. A., Johnson, D. R., Bremer, C. D., Cosio, A., & Thompson, M. (2004). *Essential tools—increasing rates of school completion: Moving from policy and research to practice*. Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. (synthesis)

Published by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET), this report presents a research synthesis of dropout prevention interventions for students with disabilities and provides additional tools and resources for educators and policymakers at the state, district, and school levels.

Link: <http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/dropout/dropout.pdf>

RMC Research Corporation. (2008). *Achieving graduation: New York benchmark high schools*. Portsmouth, NH: Author. (qualitative study)

This report identifies and synthesizes research-supported strategies that high schools use to reduce their dropout rates and increase the number of students pursuing postsecondary education. The benchmarking system developed and used by RMC, along with their research framework, was used to explore successful school practices at the five case study schools. Findings are organized into six main categories: academic rigor, personalization and support, motivation and engagement, defining staff expectations and support, leadership and structure, and family and community engagement. The report parallels the research in each of these key areas with promising practices observed at the case study schools.

Link: <http://rmcres.com/documents/Magellan.pdf>

What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Reports

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) provides a host of rigorous systematic reviews on interventions for targeting dropout prevention. Each individual intervention report evaluates the evidence-base for a particular school and/or community-based dropout prevention program. The programs listed below those for which the WWC has found studies that have empirically evaluated effects on key outcomes for high school students (staying in school, progressing in school, and/or completing school). Each intervention report presents a description of the intervention being evaluated and below is a brief excerpt from about each such program summarizing the WWC's specific findings.

WWC Intervention Report: Accelerated Middle Schools

“potentially positive effects on staying in school and positive effects on progressing in school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008)

Link: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/ams/>

WWC Intervention Report: ALAS (Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success)

“potentially positive effects on staying in school and potentially positive effects on progressing in school at the end of the intervention (ninth grade)” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006)

Link: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/alas/>

WWC Intervention Report: Career Academies

“potentially positive effects on staying in school, potentially positive effects on progressing in school, and no discernible effects on completing school for those youth most at-risk of dropping out prior to the intervention” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006)

Link: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/career_academic/

WWC Intervention Report: Check and Connect

“positive effects on staying in school and potentially positive effects on progressing in school. It was found to have no discernible effects on completing school within four years of entering the program” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006)

Link: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/check_conn/

WWC Intervention Report: Financial incentives for teen parents to stay in school

“potentially positive effects on staying in school, no discernible effects on progressing in school, and no discernible effects on completing school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006)

Link: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/fitpss/>

WWC Intervention Report: First Things First

“no discernible effects on staying in school in its first year of implementation” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008)

Link: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/ftf/>

WWC Intervention Report: High School Redirection

“mixed effects on staying in school, potentially positive effects on progressing in school, and no discernible effects on completing school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007)

Link: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/hs_redirect/

WWC Intervention Report: Job Corps

“no discernible effects on progressing in school and potentially positive effects on completing school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008)

Link: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/jobcorps/>

WWC Intervention Report: JOBSTART

“potentially positive effects on completing school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008)

Link: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/jobstart/>

WWC Intervention Report: Middle College High School

“no discernible effects on staying in school or completing school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007) **Link:** http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/midcollege_hs/

WWC Intervention Report: New Chance

“potentially positive effects on completing school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008)

Link: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/new_chance/

WWC Intervention Report: Project GRAD

“no discernible effects on progressing in school or on completing school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007)

Link: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/project_grad/

WWC Intervention Report: Quantum Opportunity Program

“no discernible effects on progressing in school or completing school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007)

Link: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/quantum_op/

WWC Intervention Report: Summer Training and Education Program (STEP)

“no discernible effects on either staying in school or progressing in school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2009)

Link: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/step/index.asp>

WWC Intervention Report: Talent Development High Schools

“potentially positive effects on progressing in school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007)

Link: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/tdhs/>

WWC Intervention Report: Talent Search

“potentially positive effects on completing school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006)

Link: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/talent_search/

WWC Intervention Report: Twelve Together

“potentially positive effects on staying in school and no discernible effects on progressing in school” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007)

Link: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/dropout/12_together/