



THE GEORGIA SCHOOL COMPLETION PROJECT: SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

By Laura Brown, Director for North GLRS, Dinah W. Martin, Program Specialist for North GLRS, and Loujeania Williams Bost, Director, National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, Clemson University

The 2004 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires each state to develop a state performance program and establish targets for improvements toward reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates among youth with disabilities. Among other requirements, states must compare dropout and graduation rates of youth with Individual Education Plans to those of all students enrolled in the state, analyze trend data in dropout and graduation, and develop improvement activities to assist the state to reach designated targets.

Concern for the number of students with disabilities who do not complete high school prompted the North Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) Center to pursue a partnership with the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students

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TELEPHONE SEMINAR—THE BIG FOUR: A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO SCHOOL COMPLETION

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

12:00 noon - 1:30 pm EST

Presenter: Dr. Jim Knight, Research Associate, University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning

One way to enable more students to stay in school and be successful is to improve the quality of instruction they receive. If more students successfully acquire the content, skills, and strategies they need to succeed, and if more students achieve success, then more students will graduate. Unfortunately, improving instruction is easier said than done. Many different factors are involved in the complex practice of teaching, and educators may be unsure about where to begin improving instruction. This presentation will describe a framework, The Big Four, which professional developers, coaches, and other educators can use to find a starting point for this challenge. The Big Four Framework of (a) Classroom

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19th ANNUAL AT-RISK YOUTH NATIONAL FORUM— CONCURRENT SESSIONS: STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The 19th Annual At-Risk Youth National Forum, to be held in Myrtle Beach, SC from February 18-21, 2007, will provide educators at all levels with the “Tools, Techniques, and Strategies That Encourage Students to Graduate.”

During the Forum, innovative, skilled presenters who have excellent ideas, proven programs that have evidence-based research will share in the areas of (1) students with disabilities, (2) literacy (helping struggling readers), (3) attendance/truancy, (4) teen pregnancy prevention, (5) after-school programs, (6) workforce preparation, (7) resiliency and (8) service-learning.

The 2007 Forum is designed to enhance the leadership skills of all adults who are seeking to strengthen interventions among school, community, and families, especially those in at-risk situations. Below is a list of concurrent sessions that are included in the students with disabilities strand:

Monday, February 19, 2007

8:30 — 10:00am: Concurrent Session

“Dropout Prevention for Students with Disabilities: Recommendations for Teachers” presented by Dr. Sandra C. Smith from the NDPC-SD

- This session will (1) increase participants’ understanding of dropout and its effect on students with disabilities, (2) increase participants’ understanding of the variables within classroom systems that impact the correlates of dropout (poor attendance, problem behavior, and low achievement), and (3) provide participants with an overview of effective teaching principles and how they relate to academic success for students with disabilities who are at risk of dropping out.

1:00 — 2:00pm: Concurrent Session

“Universal Design for Learning: A Promising Concept for ALL Students” presented by Dr. Larry Kortering, Dr. Terry McClannon, and Dr. Patricia Braziel from Appalachian State University

- Findings as to UDL interventions in high school

algebra and biology classes suggest that, relative to their other academic classes, both groups of students report high levels of satisfaction, while expressing similar (by not identical) themes as to what they perceive to be the best and worst parts of the interventions and ideas for improvement. Both groups also reported near unanimous agreement as to wanting their teachers to use more UDL interventions. The reported perceptions and subsequent comparison forms the basis for discussing the implications of UDL in high school settings.

2:15 — 3:30pm: Carousel Session

“Building Effective Dropout Prevention Programs: Lessons Learned from Research and Practice” presented by Dr. Loujeania W. Bost with the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities

- Since 2004, the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) has synthesized available research and practice in the area of dropout prevention for students with disabilities. Our efforts have yielded insights into why youth with disabilities drop out, the consequences faced by these youth, and effective prevention strategies. In this session, we share with you some of the key strategies and recommendations gleaned from research and practice.

2:15 — 3:45pm: Concurrent Session

“Dropout Prevention for Students with Disabilities: Recommendations for Administrators” presented by Dr. Matthew Klare with the NDPC-SD

- This presentation is geared toward district and school administrators. It focuses on identifying risk factors for dropout and steps that will help decrease dropout among students with disabilities. This session includes a discussion of dropout among students with disabilities, its costs, and consequences, as well as a summary of national data from the State Performance Plans. It also provides information on examining

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dropout correlates and identifying system-level needs with respect to dropout. Finally, it provides tips and strategies administrators can use to increase school completion among students with disabilities.

Tuesday February 20, 2007

10:15 — 11:15am: Concurrent Sessions

“School-Wide Positive Behavior Support: Feel the Heat!” presented by Ms. Robin Morrison from Miami-Dade County Public Schools & Ms. Stephanie Martinez from University of South Florida.

- This session will begin with an introduction of the School-Wide PBS process. It will be followed with a review of the current status of Miami-Dade County’s implementation process, as well as a discussion of the challenges and triumphs of the district. Miami-Dade County is the third largest school district in the nation.

“Transition Strategies that Improve the School Completion of Students with Disabilities” presented by Dr. David Test and Dr. James White from the University of North Carolina

- Approximately 28% of students with disabilities leave school prematurely leading to poor outcomes. The presentation provides descriptions of evidence-based secondary transition practices that enhance school completion of students with disabilities related to (a) student focused-planning, (b) student development, (c) interagency collaboration, (d) family involvement, and (e) program structures.

Wednesday February 21, 2007

8:30 — 9:30am: Concurrent Session

“Transforming Transition: Blueprints for High School and Post-Secondary Success” presented by Ms. Heather Torrence from MSU Billings Montana Center on Disabilities

- Participate in hands-on learning experience while receiving instruction on five models for successful high school participation and post-secondary transition for students with disabilities. Blueprints, which may be easily implemented in most communities, include a classroom model, service learning, school club,

community-parent meetings, and one-on-one mentoring. Successes, as well as challenges and solutions will be offered.

“Entrepreneurship as a Tool for Increasing Attendance and Reducing Dropouts” presented by Mr. Aaron Bocage from EDTEC Inc.

- Learn how teaching at risk students to earn honest money creates excitement about school and strengthens students’ links with the school.

9:45 — 10:45am: Concurrent Session

“Check & Connect: Strategies to Engage High School Students in School” presented by Ms. Colleen Kaibel from Minneapolis Public Schools.

- This evidence-based dropout prevention procedure is also a part of OSEP’s model program investment with the University of MN.
- Join this interactive seminar for a discussion about Check & Connect. The presenters include the Coordinator/Director and two program staff from urban high schools. The discussion will focus on core components of the model, procedures for identifying youth, specific strategies used, and program impact for students with and without disabilities.

“Reaching and Teaching All Michigan Students” presented by Ms. Leisa Gallagher from Michigan Department of Education.

- Michigan’s commitment to ‘success for all’ created special and general education collaborations to redesign high school practices. Presenters share success in: (1) tiered supports in high schools, (2) transition plans which begin with a student’s post-secondary vision, (3) teacher reflection on students perceived as hard to reach or teach.

Registration and Information —

For more information and to register for the At-Risk Youth Forum, go to:

www.dropoutprevention.org/conferen/conferen.htm#atrisk_forum

TELEPHONE SEMINAR—PARTNERING WITH PARENTS IN DROPOUT PREVENTION: THE NEED AND THE HOW- RECAP AND INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLINE

On November 9, 2006, NDPC-SD presented a teleseminar, "Partnering with Parents in Dropout Prevention: The Need and the How." The Presenters were:

- Dixie Jordan, Co-Director of the Family and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE), PACER
- Deborah Leuchovius, Director of the Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA) Project, PACER
- Aurelio M. Montemayor, Director of the Parent Information and Resource Center, IDRA

As research indicates and experience sadly makes all too clear, students who drop out of school face a difficult future. They are more likely to be unemployed, incarcerated, and/or impoverished. For students with disabilities, the risks are intensified. However, families can play an important role in ensuring that their student with or without disabilities graduate. By staying involved, focusing on individual strengths, finding the right school setting, and holding high expectations, parents can help their children prepare for successful adulthood.

Ms. Jordan and Ms. Leuchovius provided participants with a brief summary of research highlighting the role of parents in dropout prevention, examined the need for parents and families to stay involved in the education of their sons and daughters throughout their middle school and high school years, and supplied examples of practical strategies that families can employ to help teenagers succeed.



Deborah Leuchovius

Mr. Montemayor presented IDRA's four dimensions of valued parent engagement, which includes parents as (1) teachers, (2) resources, (3) decision-makers, and (4) leaders and trainers. Mr. Montemayor provided clear explanations as to how these four dimensions are reflected in effective educational policy and parent engagement practice. The teleconference

attracted a large audience of 124 representatives from 44 school districts, state departments of education, and organizations (or an average of 2.82 attendees per site). At the end of the teleseminar, attendees were asked to respond to a polling question. 38 sites responded to the question, "What family involvement strategies are of the greatest interest to you today?" Attendees were given three selections from which to choose from. Below are the results. The number to the left of each selection is the number of responses to that selection, including the percentage based on all 38 responses:

Aurelio M. Montemayor



- 26 (68%): Help schools engage parents in the middle school and secondary school education of their children.
- 2 (5%): Help parents promote the academic achievement of middle and secondary school students at home.
- 10 (26%): Help parents who want to develop leadership skills needed to become advocates for all students.

In addition, 33 sites completed the evaluation survey of the event. Attendees gave the program very high ratings on their evaluations. 91% of the attendees rated the overall teleseminar as "excellent," "very good," or "good," and 87% rated the content in the same way. 97% of the attendees answered "strongly agree," "somewhat agree," or "neutral" to the statement, "This NDPC-SD program was relevant to improving results for students with disabilities." 93% found the event to be "of high quality" and "useful to their organization" through their responses using the same scale as in the previous question.

The presenters also received very high marks. Aurelio Montemayor received the highest marks with 97% of the attendees rating the overall effectiveness of his presentation as "excellent," "very good," or "good." 96%

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of the attendees found the overall effectiveness of Dixie Jordan’s presentation to also be “excellent,” “very good,” or “good,” and 93% of the attendees rated Deborah Leuchovius in the same way. Loujeania Williams Bost also received an excellent rating with 97% of the attendees giving her introduction an “excellent,” “very good,” or “good” rating. Lastly, nearly all of the 36 sites stated that they would participate in another teleseminar with only three stating that they would not.

EVENT MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

Downloadable event materials, audio clips (MP4s), PDF transcripts, and contact information for each of the presenters is now available online at: www.ndpc-sd.org/econnections/archives.htm

TELEPHONE SEMINAR—THE BIG FOUR continued from page 1

Management, (b) Content Knowledge, (c) Direct Instruction, and (d) Formative Assessment provides a simple, yet sophisticated way of analyzing critical variables in teaching and identifying next steps in the important process of improving teaching practices. Individuals and groups looking for a starting point for instructional improvement should find this presentation extremely useful.

About the Presenter:



Dr. Jim Knight is a research associate at the University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning. He has spent more than a decade studying instructional coaching. Jim directs a comprehensive, district-wide school reform

project, Pathways to Success, in the Topeka, Kansas School District. Pathways to Success employs school-wide curriculum reform, led by Instructional Coaches, to achieve wide-scale implementation of Content Enhancement, Learning Strategy, and Positive Behavior Interventions across all middle and high schools in the district. Jim’s articles on Instructional Coaching have been included in publications such as The Journal of Staff Development, Principal Leadership, and The School Administrator. His books, Instructional Coaching, to be published by Corwin Press and Coaching Classroom Management, written with Randy Sprick, Wendy Reinke, and Tricia McCale, are scheduled to be published early in 2007. Jim is frequently asked to guide professional learning for instructional coaches and has presented and consulted in more than 35 states, most Canadian provinces, and in Japan. He has also won several university teaching and innovation awards.

Who should attend this program:

Representatives of state education agencies, school-based leadership teams, classroom and special education teachers, central office

and building level leadership, parent leaders, and policymakers.

Site Registration Fee: \$75.00*

*FREE to State Directors of Special Education, OSEP/OSERS & Regional Parent Information Centers

Registration Fee Includes:

Access from one telephone line and one set of reproducible materials. Participants can invite as many people to participate as one telephone connection can accommodate. When you register, you will receive instructions on how to access the seminar from your telephone and how to receive participant materials by mail or e-mail. The seminar registration fee includes access from one telephone line and one set of reproducible participant materials. Participants can pay using a credit card, check, or purchase order. If you wish to use a purchase order, you must register by phone. All purchase orders must be made out to Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC).

Register by calling 1-800-775-7654 or email Deb Hall for more information at: dhall@edc.org.

SEMINAR CODE: 12242

with Disabilities (NDPC-SD). After receiving approval from the Georgia Department of Education (Division for Exceptional Students), North GLRS and the NDPC-SD collaboratively developed a plan for decreasing dropout for students with disabilities through focused planning and implementation of research-validated practices. All high schools and 9th Grade Academies from thirteen school systems in the northeast corner of Georgia are presently participating in this two year project which focuses on training and targeted support provided by the NDPC-SD.

GLRS

The Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) is a statewide network of 17 centers located throughout the state. GLRS provides training and resources to educators and parents of students with disabilities. To support local school systems in meeting the federal requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), GLRS provides ongoing professional learning to teachers and administrators to assist them in implementing effective instructional strategies.

The thirteen school systems are diverse in their student demographics, free or reduced lunch rates, student population size, and resources available to schools. A professional learning design team consisting of staff members from NDPC-SD and North GLRS developed a custom-tailored training to meet the unique needs of the school systems in the region. Support for the School Completion Project was obtained through awareness presentations to area superintendents and other system-level program directors. As a result, the schools selected an implementation team to attend four training sessions and lead the initiative at the local level. Recommended team size consisted of four participants; required members were a building administrator and a special education teacher from the school. Schools were free to select other team members. A variety of professionals within the schools (e.g., guidance counselors, general education teachers, graduation coaches, parent liaisons, and social workers) complete the team make-up.

NDPC-SD's Dropout Prevention School Intervention Framework (DPSIF, a systematic framework to support

effective school-based implementation of dropout prevention efforts (View Intervention Framework at www2.edc.org/ndpc-sd/InterventionFramework.pdf) is used to guide implementation within the region. This four phase process is used to equip team members with competencies to sustain and expand efforts in data analysis to identify risk and protective factors in the school, identification of priority areas for intervention, identification and selection of evidence-based practices to address needs, and development and implementation of effective programs in dropout prevention. A two tier training plan supports the implementation of the framework.

In Tier I, the NDPC-SD provides training to support a trainer of trainers' model for future implementation. The train the trainer model leverages resources and establishes a foundation to support capacity building for addressing dropout prevention in the future. Within this tier, the implementation teams attend four days of interactive training. Training topics presented include the following:

- Dropout as a serious national concern
- Current research that looks at causes, differential outcomes, and effective intervention models
- Individual school-based data collection analysis and need prioritization
- Evidence-based models and programs with presentations by national experts
- Home, school, and community partnerships that help students with disabilities stay in school
- Intervention implementation, monitoring, and evaluation

These modules guide capacity building and are designed to create an awareness and understanding of dropout among students with disabilities; identify effective research-based interventions and effective program models, and guide the implementation of a systematic framework to support effective school-based implementation. Here's what participants had to say about the training:

» The information we received will help us better target those students with disabilities because we

will have a broader knowledge of the risk factors/indicators.

» We will use the information gathered and knowledge learned to create a system of interventions to assist students with disabilities and those labeled at risk for graduation.

» We plan to help support the schools' efforts in implementing evidenced based interventions based on their data.

» We are looking for dropout prevention teaching techniques for students with disabilities, which would also help those who have not been classified as such, but who are experiencing the same difficulties and frustrations.

» I believe many of the strategies discussed in the trainings can be used school wide, not just with students with disabilities. We plan on using these strategies to improve student achievement across the board.

» The ideas should be used to help all students, not just those with disabilities. If you help special education students in a learning environment you help all the students. We have to look at differentiated learning/teaching as well as relationship building for our students.

» I thoroughly enjoyed the presentations and the activities that allowed us to be engaged and share our experiences with others. It was highly informative.

» Excellent material! High quality! Thanks for your hard work!

Tier II training consists of targeted support to selected schools for intense guided practice. North GLRS personnel will work in the schools alongside NDPC-SD staff to provide on-site support and guidance for the implementation team and the faculty. The schools will identify existing interventions, evaluate their effectiveness, and establish compatible new initiatives in efforts to meet prioritized needs which were determined through analyzes of the school's unique data. Continuous evaluation will help schools examine the efficacy of selected interventions. In addition to the training and support for the schools in northeast Georgia, North GLRS has ensured state-wide awareness for the project through various professional groups. Staff from the Georgia Department of Education (Division for Exceptional Students), the Community in Schools of Georgia which oversees the Graduation Coach Program, and staff from other GLRS centers participated in Tier I training.

Sustainability of the work is further enhanced by shared information about dropout prevention for students with disabilities at state meetings and the winter conference of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL). In addition, Dr. Bost, NDPC-SD's Director has been asked to serve as a national expert on research strategies to increase the graduation rate of Georgia schools as part of a partnership activity with The Governor's Office, the State School Superintendent, the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, and the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education.

More Information—

More information on the Georgia School Completion Project can be obtained by contacting the following resources:

- Laura C. Brown, Director for North GLRS, 706-865-2141, lbrown@pioneerresa.org
- Dinah W. Martin, Program Specialist for North GLRS, 706-865-2141, dmartin@pioneerresa.org
- Sandra C. Smith, Research Associate, NDPC-SD, 864-656-1817, sandras@clemson.edu

UPCOMING EVENTS

»2007 Conference on Inclusive Education
February 15-17, 2007: Denver, CO
Sponsored by PEAK Parent Center
www.peakparent.org/conferences.asp

»19th Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM
February 18-21, 2007: Myrtle Beach, SC
Sponsored by NDPC/N
www.dropoutprevention.org/conferen/conference.htm

»2007 Disability Policy Seminar
March 4-6, 2007: Washington, D.C.
Sponsored by the Arc of the US, UCP, AAMR, AUCD,
and the NACDD
www.aarmr.org/Events/gas.html

»CEC's 2007 Annual Convention & Expo
April 18-21, 2007: Louisville, KY
www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ConventionExpo/default.htm

»"Meeting the Nation's Need for Personal Assistance Services: State of the Science"
April 27, 2007: Washington, D.C.
Sponsored by the Center for Personal Assistance Services and held at the National Press Club
www.pascenter.org (more info coming soon)

»NSTTAC's National Secondary Transition State Planning Institute
May 2-4, 2007: Charlotte, NC
The goal of the institute is to improve states' implementation of research-based transition practices
For further information see the 'Announcements' section. www.nsttac.org

CONTACT US

The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD)

209 Martin Street
Clemson, SC 29631-1555

Toll Free: 866-745-5641 • TDD: 866-212-2775 • Fax: 864-656-0136 • Email: NDPCSD-L@clemson.edu

www.ndpc-sd.org

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We encourage the distribution of our Newsletter.

Big IDEAs may be distributed freely as long as it is not altered in any way, distribution is without charge, and all copies retain the NDPC-SD copyright notice.



The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is committed to positive results for children with disabilities. The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities is an IDEAs that Work project. Project Officer: Dr. Selete Avoke.

For additional information visit our website at www.dropoutprevention.org or E-mail us at NDPCSD-L@clemson.edu

NDPC-SD and the Big IDEAs eNewsletter is a partnership among the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC), Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), and Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC).