



# Dropout Prevention for Students with Disabilities: Recommendations for Teachers

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# *Objectives*

1. Increase participants understanding of dropout and its effect on students with disabilities.
2. Provide participants with an overview of recent research on factors associated with dropout.
3. Increase participants understanding of the variables within classroom systems that impact correlates of dropout (e.g., poor attendance, problem behavior, student engagement, and academic failure).

# National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities



NDPC-SD

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

- NDPC-SD is a National Technical Assistance and Dissemination Center funded by OSEP.
- Our charge is to assist states in building capacity to design, develop, and implement effective dropout prevention programs based on scientifically-validated practices for students with disabilities through multiple methods of technical assistance.

# ***Technical Assistance***

1. Evidence-based dropout prevention interventions, programs, and practices
2. Evidence-based knowledge useful to school practitioners
3. Analysis of indicator data related to SPP indicator #2 (i.e., drop-out)
4. Capacity-building forums and conference presentations
5. Development of school based models

# ***“Understanding Dropout”***



***What Do We Know?***



# Dropout: A Process of Disengagement

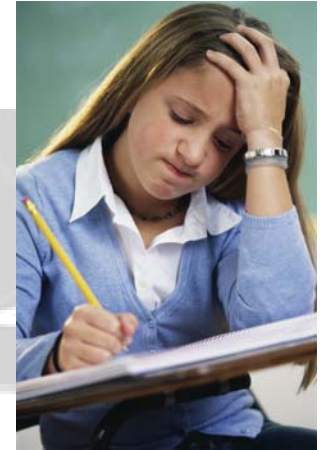
- Not an isolated event
  - ✍️ Elementary years, process begins
    - Elevated dropout rates reported among children who were rated as highly aggressive by their 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992).
    - Dropouts could be distinguished from graduates with 66% accuracy by the third grade using attendance data.
- Students who had repeated a grade as early as K – 4<sup>th</sup> grade were five times more likely to drop out of school (Kaufman & Bradby, 1992).



# Predictors of Dropout

(Balfanz & Herzog, 2005; 2006)

1. The four **strongest** predictors – determined by the end of sixth grade
  1. Poor attendance
  2. Poor behavior
  3. Failing math
  4. Failing English
2. Sixth graders who do not attend school regularly, receive poor behavior marks, or fail math or English
  - 10% chance of graduating on time
  - 20% chance of graduating a year late



# ***Predictors of Dropout***

(Balfanz & Herzog, 2006)

- Poor attendance
- Bad behavior records
- Failed math
- Failed English
- 14% graduated on time or with one extra year
- 17% on-time graduation rate
- 21% on-time graduation rate
- 16% on-time graduation rate

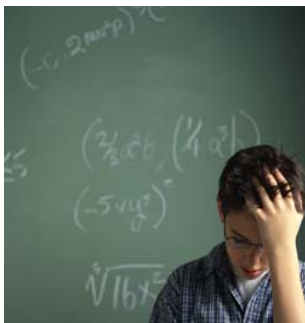
# ***Predictors of Dropout***

3. Students who repeated middle school grades are 11 times more likely to drop out than students who had not repeated
4. A student who is retained two grades increases their risk of dropping out of high school by 90% (Roderick, 1995)
5. Transition between schools
  - Middle school/junior high school to high school

# ***Predictors of Dropout***

(Balfanz & Herzog, 2006)

6. Students who enter ninth grade two or more grade levels behind their peers have only a one in two chance of being promoted to the tenth grade on time
7. Ninth grade retention is the **biggest** predictor of dropouts
8. The **biggest** falloff for students is between ninth and tenth grade



# ***Students Report Reasons for Disengagement***

- Particular classes (perceived lack of relevance, level of difficulty, and failure; e.g., algebra and biology)
- Particular teachers (negative and demeaning interactions)
- Loss of personal freedom to make choices (while in class)

# Who's Dropping Out?



...and why?

# Who's Dropping Out?

- Students with disabilities drop out of school at twice the rate of general education students (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002).
- One-third were put on in-school suspension, suspended, or put on probation; &
- 15% were either expelled or told they could not return (Schwartz, 1995).
- NLTS data suggest that 38% of students with disabilities who left school did so by dropping out.
  - 38% enrolled in HS but did not finish; 8% dropped out before entering HS; 3% "aged out"

# Who's Dropping Out?

- 55% of youth with ED (Wagner, 1995).
- 17% to 42% of students with LD
- 21% to 64% of students with BD (Scanlon & Mellard, 2002).
  - Tardiness/poor attendance
  - Lack of interest
  - Disability-based difficulties/behavior problems
  - Poor relationships with peers or adults
  - Poor/limited academic skills
  - Movement from school to school

# ***What happens to dropouts?***

## The lives of dropouts

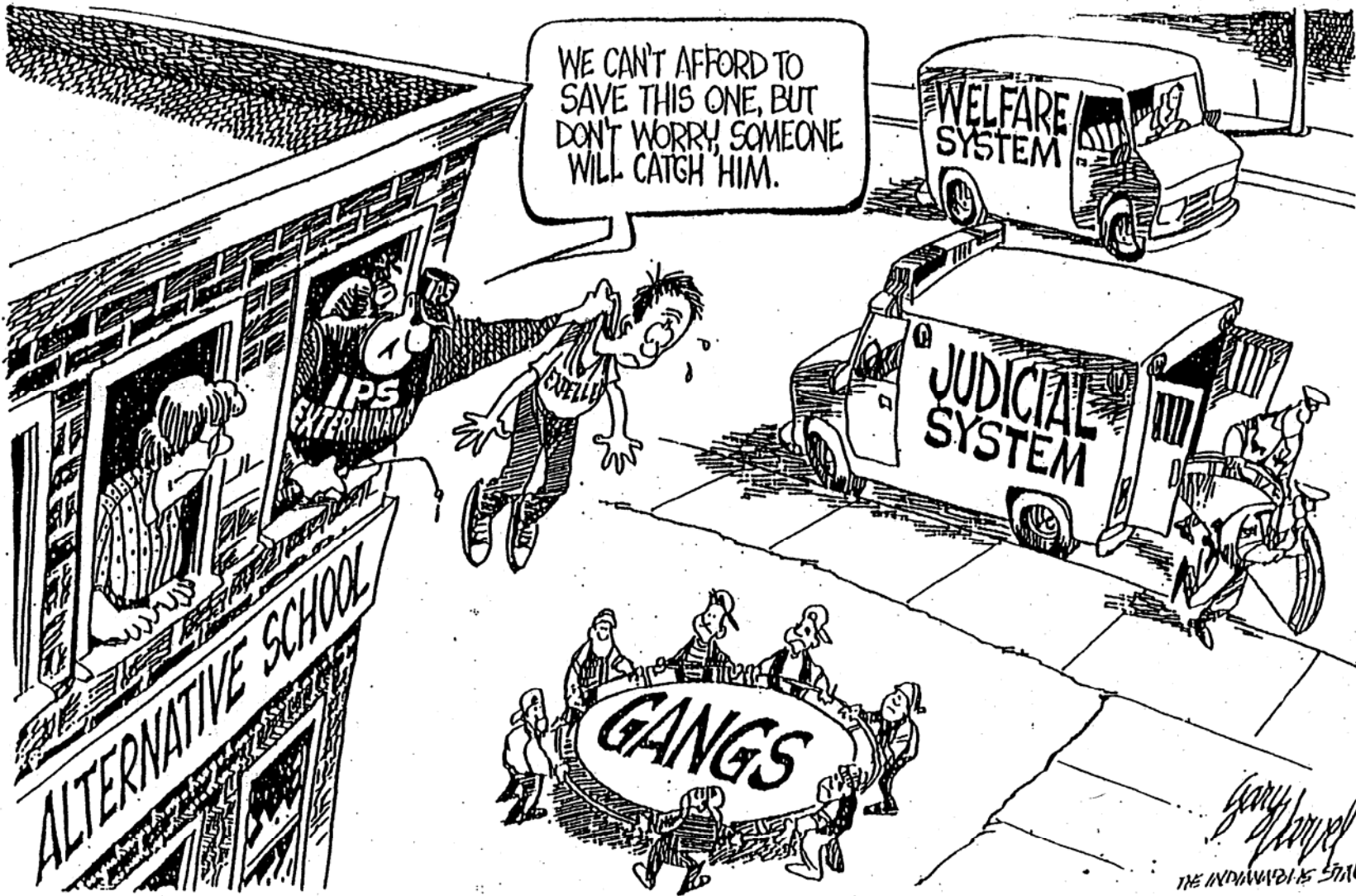
- ❑ Students with disabilities who dropout are less likely to earn a GED than others (Marder & D'Amico, 1992).
- ❑ 82% of crimes are committed by people who have dropped out of school (APA Commission on Youth Violence, 1993).
- ❑ 73% of youth with EBD were arrested 3 to 5 years after they dropped out (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996).
- ❑ Dropouts' earnings lag far behind those of degree holders, even when they work full time (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1999).
- ❑ Dropouts are less likely to be enrolled in postsecondary education (NTLS2, 2006).

# ***Push Effects That Lead to Dropout***

(Jordan, McPartland, & Lara, 1999)

## ***Push Effects***

- Did not like school
- Could not get along with teachers/students
- Suspended too often
- Expelled too often
- Did not feel safe at school
- Did not belong
- Could not keep up with school work/failing school



WE CAN'T AFFORD TO  
SAVE THIS ONE, BUT  
DON'T WORRY, SOMEONE  
WILL CATCH HIM.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

IPS  
EXTERIOR

WELFARE  
SYSTEM

JUDICIAL  
SYSTEM

GANGS

Gary Halliday  
THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

# Interventions

## Approaches with limited effectiveness

- Short-lived approaches
- Punishment-oriented approaches
- Approaches not focused on engaging students in school

## Effective approaches to increase school completion

- Approaches focused on engaging students
- Strength-based approaches
- Approaches matched to student needs
- Long-term approaches
- Approaches involving various contexts

# Interventions

- View dropping out as part of a process of disengagement and alienation, not an event, and when viewed as such, interventions should begin early (ABC Researchers, 1995).
  - Early intervention (sometimes as early as preschool)
  - Long-term interventions
  - Parental/family involvement

# Interventions

- Focus on factors linked to dropout
  - Influenced by educators
    - Attendance
    - Behavior
    - Academic performance
    - Student engagement
    - Adult/peer interactions
    - Safe school environment
    - Evaluate policies and procedures regarding dropouts
- Implementation of evidence-based strategies/interventions

# ***Understanding Dropout***

- Dropping out of school is a process of disengagement that begins early
- School completion encompasses a broader view than simply preventing dropout
- Engaging students in school and learning is a key ingredient in preventing dropout and keeping kids in school
- **Retention** has been identified as the **single most powerful** predictor for dropping out (Rumberger, 1995)
- A focus on enhancing students' connection with school and facilitating successful school performance is a promising approach for improving school completion

# Taking a Closer Look



## Inside the Classroom

# Discussion: Taking a Closer Look

*DO YOU AGREE?*

Schools (i.e., administrators and educators) bear some responsibility for students who dropout.

*Why or Why not?*

# ***Taking a Closer Look***

Why are we responsible?

- School policies & procedures
  - Discipline, grading, standards, retention
- Structure & class assignment
  - School size, transitions, tracking
- Course content & instruction
  - Boredom, curriculum quality
- Climate & relationships
  - Alienation, negative interactions

# ***What Students Say***

*(Kortering & Braizel 2006)*

Students want 5 things to help them be successful

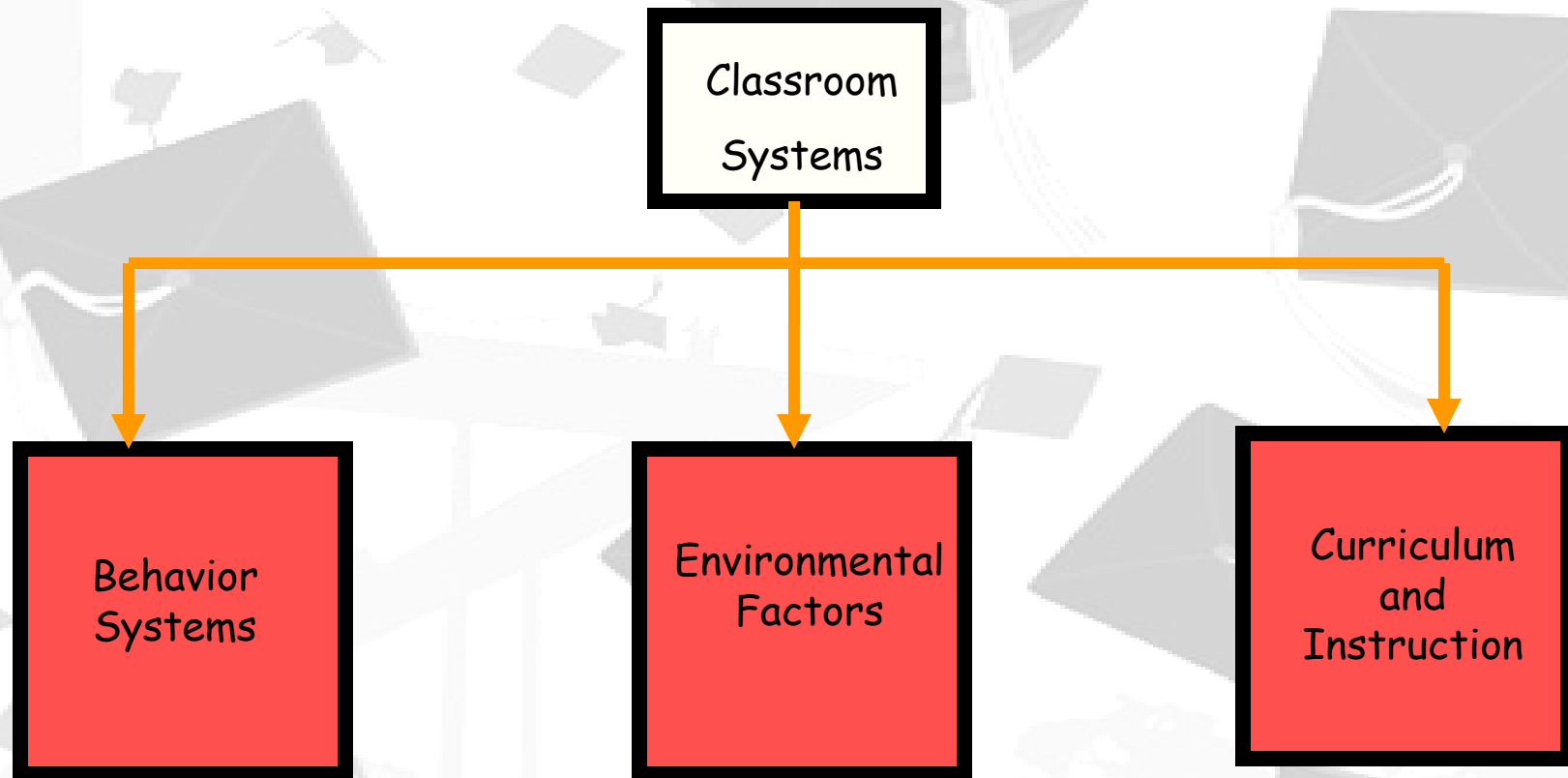
1. Help with identifying what they want to do in life  
-basis for a productive adulthood **Relevance**
2. Classwork that they see as connected to their  
lives or future **Relevance**
3. Engagement in the learning process **Rigor**
4. Positive interactions with adults **Relationships**
5. A certain level of enjoyment during their high  
school years **Revelry**

# *Building Success Inside the Classroom*



## Classroom Systems

# Classroom Systems



# Behavior Systems

Assessment

Expectations and Rules

Reward Systems

Effective Consequences

Teaching a Behavior Curriculum

Monitor and Evaluation

# Curriculum and Instruction

Curricular Modifications

Task Alteration/Division

Choice/Preference

Materials

Difficulty

Meaningfulness/Functional

# Environmental Factors

Physical Setting

Scheduling

Rules

Socialization/ Inclusion

# Understanding **YOUR** Classroom

- Have a clear vision about the following:
  - What do you want your classroom to be like?
  - What should it look like?
  - What should it feel like to a class member or visitor?
  - What do you want your students to accomplish?
  - What do you want to accomplish?

# A Clear Vision Helps You...

- Identify your goals and goals for your students
- Identify expectations and procedures
- Design a functional environment
- Identify potential barriers to success
- Celebrate successes!!

Sprick, Garrison, Howard; 1998

# ***Assessment Tools That Address Specific Areas***

- **Behavior Systems**
  - Positive Behavior Support Interview
  - Direct Observations
  - Frequency Counts
  - ABC
  - Scatter Plot
- **Environmental**
  - Positive Environment Checklist
- **Curriculum and Instruction**
  - Classroom Student Interview
  - Evaluation of Instruction

# Assessments

- The importance of assessing your classroom
  - Identify systems needing more support
  - Identify problem areas to target
  - Identify what information you want to capture specific to your students

# Assessments

- What information needs to be collected
  - Common system in place
  - Individualized systems based on classroom needs
  - Specific system for individual students
  - General information regarding academics, attendance, student assessments

# Assessment Tools

- Initial Classroom Assessment
  - Assessment for the class as a “whole”
    - Not specific to individual students
  - Allows you to look at and assess all three areas of your classroom
    - Behavior
    - Curriculum
    - Environment

# ***Tools for Assessing the Classroom as a Whole***

- Interviews
- Permanent Product Sampling
  - Absences, tardiness, completed assignments, achievement
- Direct Observation
  - Target those select individuals that are responsible for the bulk of incidences
  - Target the entire class if many students are engaged in problem behavior or to identify your problem areas
- Scatter Plots
- Frequency Counts

# Whole Class Assessment Example

- Through permanent product review, Mrs. Jones discovered the following:
  - 13% average daily absentee rate
  - Pattern indicated higher percentage of students absent on Mondays
  - Tardiness was not a problem
  - 98% completed assignments but average performance correct was 77%
  - Performance improved when students were randomly placed in groups

# Making Sense of The Data

- Make sure the information you collected captures your classroom
- Identify primary areas of need
- Develop goals based on the information you have collected
- Identify whether additional information needs to be collected

# Assessing the Environment



## and Curriculum and Instruction



# Positive Environment Checklist

- ✓ Designed for use in evaluating whether the settings in which persons with disabilities and/or challenging behaviors are structured in a manner that promotes and supports positive behaviors

# Positive Environment Checklist

- ✓ Should be used as a proactive, preventative approach to addressing problem behavior
- ✓ 5 sections
  - Physical setting
  - Social setting
  - Activities and instruction
  - Scheduling and predictability
  - Communication

# Classroom Student Interview

- Interview with the student regarding classroom work, behavior, core subjects
- Opportunity to build a rapport with the student
- Identify what aspect of the curriculum and/or subject area(s) the student is struggling with

# Assessment and Vision

- Does your vision match your assessment?
- How can you use your assessment to obtain your vision?
- Implement
- Evaluate



## ***Student performance is enhanced when...***

- ✓ Teachers use research-based strategies
- ✓ Teachers use instructional time efficiently, while providing multiple means of engagement
- ✓ Teachers provide frequent reinforcement
- ✓ Teachers provide culturally diverse students with equal opportunities to participate
- ✓ Teachers build positive relationships with students



## ***Student performance is enhanced when...***

- ✓ Teachers maintain a comfortable and welcoming classroom environment
- ✓ Teachers believe that ALL students can achieve & act upon their beliefs
- ✓ When students know what is expected of them
- ✓ Teachers establish classroom routines
- ✓ Teachers and parents build supportive partnerships

# Positive Interactions With Adults

- Students want teachers who care about them and their future
- Students want you to **hear** what they have to say
- Teaching the whole student, not just delivering content
  - Technology as a tool for engagement
  - Learning with peers
  - Learning tasks that highlight students' talents
  - Engagement that extends beyond the classroom



“If a child doesn’t know how to read, *we teach.*”

“If a child doesn’t know how to swim, *we teach.*”

“If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, *we teach.*”

“If a child doesn’t know how to drive, *we teach.*”

“If a child doesn’t know how to behave, *we.....*  
*.....teach? .....punish?”*

“Why can’t we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?”

*(Herner, 1998)*

***“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”***



***-Frederick Douglas***

# *Additional Resources*

- ❖ [www.ndpc-sd.org](http://www.ndpc-sd.org)
- ❖ [www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org)
- ❖ [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)
- ❖ [www.nsttac.org](http://www.nsttac.org)
- ❖ [www.psocenter.org](http://www.psocenter.org)
- ❖ [www.abt.sliidea.org](http://www.abt.sliidea.org)
- ❖ [www.sri.com/policy/cehs/dispolicy/nlts.html](http://www.sri.com/policy/cehs/dispolicy/nlts.html)

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