

National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD)
**“Engaging Students with School:
The Essential Dimension of Dropout Prevention Programs”**
Dr. Sandra L. Christenson
January 22, 2008

(Dr. Bost): Good afternoon and welcome to our webinar today. In today’s webinar, Engaging Students With School: The Essential Dimension of Dropout Prevention Program, our presenter is Dr. (Sandra L. Christenson) from the University of Minnesota.

Prior to having Dr. (Christenson) begin we want to look at putting dropout within the context. Next slide please. (Unintelligible) over time in the literature and in the research have identified that dropout follows a predictable pathway to school dropouts. As such, the encouraging thing about the predictability of that pathway is that behaviors that are predictable can be altered in a satisfactory manner.

Next slide please. Let’s look at that pathway now. Dropout is not an isolated event. It begins early, often as early as elementary school. As a matter of fact, researchers have identified signs of leaving and being able to predict school dropout as early as first grade through those students who are rated as highly aggressive by their first grade teachers.

Moving into third grade, dropouts could be distinguished from graduates with 66% accuracy using attendance to date alone. And in recent, and then looking at identification of dropouts could be accomplished with reasonable accuracy based on review of performance in behavior, attendance in academic areas during the early elementary grades.

Next slide. In recent research by (Belfont and Herzog), 2005 and 2006 middle school predictors became apparent and evident that would hold forth through a number of trial studies. The four strongest predictors of dropout could be

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determined by the end of sixth grade by looking at poor attendance, poor behavior marks, failing math and failing English.

And sixth graders who do not attend school regularly receive poor behavior marks or fail math or English only had about 10% chance of graduating on time or 20% chance of graduating one year later. We began to continue with middle school, that children who repeated middle school grades are 11 times more likely to dropout than students who had not repeated.

A student who is retained two grades increases their risk of dropping out of high school by 90%. And that transitions between schools are critical times for at risk students. Looking further into high school – high school predictors of dropouts – looking at students who enter ninth grade two or more year grade levels behind their peers have only a one in two chance of being promoted to the 10th grade.

And ninth grade (unintelligible) has been identified as the biggest predictor of dropout out of high school. And the biggest fall off of students happens between the ninth and the 10th grade in a time that has become known as Freshmores, those students who have repeated the ninth grade more than once and should be in the sophomore class.

Also emerging as a trend of increased dropout rates in grades 11 and 12, primarily looking at insufficient course accrual as well as the inability to pass graduation tests. So we begin to think, next slide please, we begin to consider if dropping out is the process of disengagement, so how then do we begin to influence student engagement in school?

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In our webinar today Dr. (Christenson) will describe universal and individualized interventions for students with and without disabilities. Viewing engagement as comprised of four subtypes, Dr. (Christenson) will explain the ideal characteristics to achieve an assessment to intervention link as well as database interventions that maximize the goodness of persons fit to the environment.

Additionally, Dr. (Christenson) will discuss effective interventions for students at risk of educational failure with the focus on more than attendance and academic skills but also on indicators of students' commitment to learning, perceptions of academic and social competence and a sense of belonging by educators and parents.

We're pleased to have Dr. (Sandra Christenson) in our audience today. Dr. (Christenson) is a professor of educational psychology, child psychology and psychology at the University of Minnesota. She's a faculty member in the school psychology program.

Her research is focused (on interventions) that enhance student engagement with school and learning and identification of family and school contextual factors that facilitate student engagement and increase the probability for student success in school.

She is particularly interested in those students who are most alienated from traditional schooling practices and/or highest risk for dropping out of school and the ways to promote the role of family in educating students. She has been the principle investigator of several federally funded projects in the area of dropout prevention and family partnership.

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Research on Check and Connect, one of these evidence based models for engaging students and families in school and learning is in its 17th year.

Dr. (Christenson) is the recipient of several awards including the (Lionel Whitmore) Award from the American Psychological Association for scholarship and early career contributions to the field of school psychology; the (Blanche F. Edelson) Award for pioneering work with school/family partnerships from the American Author Psychiatry Association.

And the Senior Scientist Award from APA Division 16 in recognition of a career long significant program of scholarship representing outstanding contributions to the scientific knowledge base of school psychology.

She holds an endowed professorship at the University of Minnesota, regularly contributes to the school psychology literature and conducts applied research mainly in urban settings. We're pleased to have Dr. (Christenson) with us today.

(Sandy) at this time I'd like to turn the program over to you.

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