

The Keys to Success in Dropout Prevention

The 21 Most Effective Strategies Defined

Since 1986, the National Dropout Prevention Center has been testing, researching, and identifying the most effective strategies for helping all young people graduate and start on the road to a successful life. Fifteen strategies have emerged over time as the most proven and effective means for achieving these goals. Iowa has identified six additional strategies resulting in 21 total strategies in this compilation. Annotations from the national center have been modified for Iowa.

- **Systemic Renewal** — A continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners. *"Policies and Practices Related to Student Failure and Dropping Out"* is a resource of the Iowa Department of Education.
- **Community Collaboration** — When all groups/agencies in a community/region provide collective support to the schools, an infrastructure is created that provides a caring, supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve. Services of public and private agencies need to be engaged.
- **Professional Development** — Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and need to have an avenue by which they continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.
- **Family Involvement** — Research consistently finds that family involvement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school. Family involvement from all socio-economic circumstances is crucial from birth through adolescence.
- **Early Childhood Education** — Birth-to-three intervention demonstrate that providing a child additional enrichment can modify IQ. The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately drop out is to provide the best possible instruction before their school experience.
- **Reading/Writing Programs** — Early interventions to help low-achieving students recognize that focusing on reading and writing skills is the foundation for effective learning in all other subjects.
- **Alternative Schooling** — Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts a variety of options which can lead to graduation with special attention to the student's individual career and social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.
- **Individualized Instruction** — Connecting the learning of each student to the real world stimulates motivation. A customized individual program for each student places the student first and allows teachers flexibility with the instructional program and extracurricular activities.
- **Instructional Technologies** — Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction which engages students in authentic learning, addresses multiple intelligences, and adapts to students' learning styles.
- **Mentoring/Tutoring** — Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring is also a one-to-one activity but focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.
- **Service Learning** — This teaching and learning method connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. It also promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels.
- **Learning Styles/Multiple Intelligences** — When educators utilize and show students that there are different ways to learn, students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners.
- **Specialized Curriculum** — The special needs of students can successfully be addressed through courses, curriculum, and special study groups. Leadership training, study skills, conflict resolution, housing acquisition, self care, career search, etc., represent examples of specialized curriculum for personal development.
- **Violence Prevention/Conflict Resolution** — A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, deals with potential violence as well as crisis management. Violence prevention provides experiences that continues to enhance all students with positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills.
- **Career Education/Workforce Readiness** — A quality guidance program is essential for all students. School-To-Work programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to measure up to the larger demands of today's workplace.
- **Out-of-School Experience** — Many schools provide after-school and summer enhancement programs that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of areas — especially important for students at risk of school failure.
- **Personalized Planning** — The practice of personalized planning beyond curriculum achieves a focus on the student and personal motivation and ownership for behavior. When multiple barriers to learning exist, case management/personalized plans guide service, timelines, and changes to plans. The personal plan is the key for achieving success.
- **Student Leadership** — Leadership skills come through experience. Training and experience produce these skills. Leadership is achieved by providing experiences and training. Leadership skills can be achieved in tandem with or apart from academic experience.
- **Systematic Identification** — Students who need additional help to succeed have the best chance to overcome challenges if identified before school age, before severe problems arise during the school years, and are comprehensively addressed (involving the family members as well as the child and encompass academic, personal/social and career/vocational development).
- **In-School Support Services** — Support services commonly offered in school (such as psychological services, social worker, special education, nurse, audiology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, food services, and tutoring) can change student lives if accommodations are made in school to connect students to the services and allow the services to be provided consistently and at the magnitude necessary. Student success is more probable when other family members are involved who need and receive the services necessary to complement the progress of the student.
- **Review and Evaluation** — Monitoring systems are necessary to establish indicators of student success. Indicators are necessary to guide instruction and all other support. Successful programs have monitoring systems to guide instruction and program implementation. The staff involved plan for getting feedback to guide their action. Computer technology is advancing the practices monitoring and evaluation. Multiple assessments and evaluation systems are necessary to accommodate differentiated programming, multiple levels of learning, disaggregation of information to achieve equity and focus initiatives, and establish quick and informed local reporting commonly needed across service agencies beyond school.