

## 4S Multiple Pathways for Student Success

The Multiple Pathways for Student Success Working Group was made up of district representatives, college access specialists, community-based providers, advocates, and staff from RIDE and the Office of Higher Education. This supplement expands on the rationale, data, and best-practice models from outside Rhode Island that were mentioned in the Recommendations section of the full report.

### The Crisis of Completion in Rhode Island

The U.S. Department of Education's *Practice Guide on Dropout Prevention* lists six recommendations for reducing dropout rates (Dynarski et al. 2008):

- Use data systems to help identify students at high risk of dropping out.
- Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.
- Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior.
- Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.
- Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school.

### Low Proficiency and Attendance in Middle School

Data from Rhode Island show that middle-grade students in urban districts are performing less well, have been held back more, and are in school less frequently than suburban students in Rhode Island, putting them at increased risk of becoming dropouts.

- In Rhode Island, 45 percent of eighth-graders in urban districts performed at or above the proficiency level on the 2008 state assessments from the New England Common Assessments Program, compared with 74 percent of students in the remainder of the state. The urban middle school attendance rate during the 2007-2008 school year was 91 percent, compared with 95 percent in the remainder of the state (Source: RIDE).

### The Challenge of English Language Learners in High School

English language learners pose a particular challenge for urban districts, where they are concentrated, as they often need intensive academic assistance as well as cultural assimilation supports and basic English language instruction.

- During the 2006-2007 school year, there were 2,468 English language learners in Rhode Island urban public schools in grades 9-12. Of these students, 20 percent came to the United States during the 2005-2006 or 2006-2007 school years. There were 318 students who arrived during the 2005-2006 school year and 170 who arrived during the 2006-2007 school year. Of students who arrived during the 2006-2007 school year, 58 percent attended Providence schools, 22 percent attended Pawtucket schools, 14 percent attended Central Falls schools, 4 percent attended Woonsocket schools, and 2 percent attended schools in Newport (Source: RI KIDS COUNT).

## National Best-Practice Models for Alternative Pathways

In addition to the work that is already going on in Rhode Island (see recommendation 4 of the full report), there are a number of national models of successful alternative pathways for students who struggle in traditional high schools and who would benefit from non-traditional educational opportunities. These models include the New York City Department of Education's Office of Multiple Pathways and Vermont's Department of Education High School Completion Model.

### Vermont High School Completion Program

In 2007, the Vermont legislature created a high school completion model for out-of-school youth. As of spring 2009, this program was also available to in-school youth. The student, parent(s), home district, and local adult education agency collectively create a personalized program for high school completion that best addresses the need of that youth. They select from a "menu" of offerings at the home, school, adult education provider, and other entities (e.g., local training programs, gyms for physical education credit, community service projects). As the student completes each piece of the menu, the provider is compensated for that service. The plan could include creating a career plan and specific courses. The program is showing evidence of success. Approximately 50 percent of the enrolled individuals graduated with a high school diploma or GED in 2008, at an approximate cost of \$5,000 per student.

### New York City Transfer Schools

The New York City transfer schools are small, academically rigorous, full-time high schools for students who have been enrolled in high

school for at least one year and lack sufficient credits to graduate on time. The schools are a partnership between New York City Department of Education principals and teachers and community-based organizations, who provide case management and internship experiences. Students at these schools have the opportunity to accelerate their learning and make up credits toward graduation. The schools are funded by the Department of Education and the Department of Labor through the Learning to Work initiative.

## References

- Dynarski, M., L. Clarke, B. Cobb, J. Finn, R. Rumberger, and J. Smink. 2008. *Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide*. NCEE 2008-4025. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Available for download at <<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides>>
- Kennelly, L., and M. Monrad. 2007. *Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs with Appropriate Interventions*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, National High School Center. Available for download at <[www.betterhighschools.org/topics/DropoutWarningSigns.asp](http://www.betterhighschools.org/topics/DropoutWarningSigns.asp)>