

# SUPERINTENDENT'S DROPOUT CHALLENGE



**Identify 10-15 students in every elementary, middle and high school who are nearing or in a transition year with multiple dropout risk factors and provide research-based supports and interventions**

**ANNUAL IMPACT 37,000–55,500 STUDENTS**

- ★Reduce Dropouts    ★Increase Grades and Test Scores    ★Make AYP
- ★Attract and Retain Students    ★Engage Parents and Community



## TURNING THE TIDE

Research shows most students send distress signals years before they drop out of school. In fact, key early warning signs displayed by students nearing or entering transitional school years, such as 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th grades, have been proven to be strong dropout predictors.

Because schools and districts now can predict early-on which students are most likely to drop out, they also can intervene to prevent dropout.

## Early Warning Signs—Attendance, Behavior, Course Completion

### • Low Attendance

- ◊ In one study of the eighth graders in Philadelphia who attended school less than 80 % of the time, 78% eventually dropped out.

### • Disengagement in the classroom, including behavioral problems

- ◊ Sixth graders who receive a poor behavior mark have a one-in-four chance of making it to the 12th grade on time.

### • Course Completion—Poor grades in core subjects or grade retention

- ◊ Sixth graders who fail math have a one-in-five chance of making it to the 12th grade on time and often repeat the 9th grade. Those failing English have a one-in-eight chance.

- ◊ 33% of 8th grade students scoring in the lowest mathematics achievement quartile fail to graduate.

- ◊ 64% of students who had repeated a grade in elementary school and 63% of those who had been held back in middle school left school without a diploma.

## IMPLEMENTING THE CHALLENGE

**Step 1:** Commit to State Superintendent Mike Flanagan's Challenge by registering online at [www.mi.gov/dropoutchallenge](http://www.mi.gov/dropoutchallenge).

**Step 2:** Review previous year's attendance, grades, disciplinary actions, credit accumulation, grade promotion, and test scores of students nearing or entering transition years.

**Step 3:** Identify 10-15 students with multiple early warning signs. Use current school data (Regional Data Warehouses may be able to provide this information) OR for a free dropout data calculation tool visit [BetterHighSchools.org](http://BetterHighSchools.org).

**Step 4:** Provide identified students with research-based supports and interventions like tutors, mentors, graduation coach, etc.

**Step 5** Monitor student academic, social and emotional progress.

**Step 6:** Engage the community, families and students in solutions and supports.

## CHALLENGE RESULTS

A recent study shows **Challenge Schools have significantly lower dropout rates**.

Since the Challenge was announced in 2009, over 1,100 schools (including 140 school districts committing all schools) have joined the Superintendent's

Challenge. While the Challenge asked schools to identify 10-15 students, many identified substantially more — greatly increasing this program's impact.

Key highlights include: a state Dropout Prevention Conference offered free of charge with key national and state experts; the inclusion of Early Warning Signs into Regional Data Warehouses; Graduation Town, a new website to support local Dropout efforts; webinars; podcasts; numerous professional development opportunities at national, state and local events; participation in the Gallup Student Poll; a partnership with Detroit Public Television and a special recognition program. In addition, this Challenge also has become a national model for other states.

## FUNDING

Establishing an Early Warning System is a highly recommended dropout prevention strategy that can be funded with Title II-D funds. Supplementing services to support students at-risk of dropping out of school can be funded through Title I-Part A.

## RECOGNIZING PROGRESS

To recognize the substantial effort by districts and schools who join this Challenge, school and district names will appear in prominent locations on both the Michigan Department of Education website at [www.mi.gov/dropoutchallenge](http://www.mi.gov/dropoutchallenge) and Graduation Town at [www.graduationtown.org](http://www.graduationtown.org).

Other recognition opportunities also may be offered. However, Challenge schools have said the real reward is to observe student transformation, re-engagement, and progress.