2009

Dropout Prevention Grant Recipients Program Evaluation

Final Report

Presented by

The North Carolina Committee on Dropout Prevention

Prepared by

EDSTAR, Inc.

October 2011

Table of Contents

2009 Dropout Prevention Grant Recipients Program Evaluation

Final Report

Executive Summary

Description

In 2009, the General Assembly of North Carolina approved $11.8 million additional funding for dropout prevention, continuing Session Law 2007-323, which established the North Carolina Committee on Dropout Prevention (NCCDP). This funding was allocated to 83 agencies. After the interim report, budget cutbacks reduced services previously available, including closer monitoring of agencies and a comprehensive evaluation.

North Carolina's steadily increasing dropout rate finally began to decline as programs were implemented through the grant. In the 2008-2009 school year, the dropout rate fell from 4.97% to 4.27%--the lowest dropout rate ever recorded in North Carolina. For the 2009-2010 school year, North Carolina high school dropout rate was 3.75% The actual numbers fell from 19,184 to 16,804 in grades 9-12, representing a 12.4% decrease. The 2009 grant recipients reported that approximately 1,870 students served graduated in June 2011, and over 9,800 are still in school working toward graduation. Acts of crime and violence have declined correspondingly. (For specific details on the dropout and suspension incidents, see

http://dpi.state.nc.us/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2009-10/consolidated-report.pdf .)

Program descriptions

Students served

The 2009 dropout grants served approximately 25,797 students in 69 counties. Of the 9,492 targeted students served, 54% were male and 46% were female. Most of the

students served were in 9th grade. Some agencies also included services for pregnant girls and teen parents; 418 pregnant girls and teen parents were served.

Staff

Most of the permanent staff in the agencies' programs were regular teachers from the students' schools. Research shows this is advantageous in programs in which students are served outside of regular school hours (Fashola, 1998). There are more volunteers (1,215) than paid workers (1,191) in the programs. Community members, parents, student participants, and other students made up a large part of the volunteer component of the program.

Services provided

Nearly all of the grantees were able to write SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) outcomes describing their measurable goals with timeframes; 81 of 83 succeeded in doing this. Nearly all (77) submitted SMART outcomes which addressed academics; 61% of all SMART outcomes addressed reading, math, general academics, or course recovery. Integration of social and behavioral skills (e.g., leadership, self-confidence, etc.) was another common area addressed through services to help students. Most of the services were provided directly to the students in one or more of three types of programs. These were:

- Services provided to specific students or groups

- School-wide services

- Larger than school-wide

The latter two groups did not target specific students, and are considered "non-targeted" services. According to grantees, 53% provided non-targeted services to their students, with 16,305 students reported as benefitting from these services. These types of services are considered prevention services. In contrast, intervention services are those in which students are selected based on a criterion that may put them at risk for

dropping out and provided services accordingly. Services may be individualized, such as one-on-one tutoring or mentoring, or involve groups, such as classes to boost academic achievement or curtail untoward behavior. Families were also provided with educational workshops, and most participated in orientations and open houses.

Research

Education, now in a transition stage, is moving toward data-driven interventions and providing services based on what data tell us are the needs of individuals. What we have discovered, through this and other programs during our two decades of evaluating educational programs, is that successful grantees use objective criteria subject to change to target students for services. For example, students were targeted based on test scores, absenteeism, or disciplinary referrals rather than race or socioeconomic status. For this report, programs deemed "model programs" were selected for using innovative and "outside-the-box" strategies. These programs also used objective criteria for selection, offered course recovery, had a positive and close rapport with parents, and an enthusiastic support staff who believed in the students' success.

Budgets

Of the 83 agencies granted 2009 funds, 74 submitted budgets to NCDPI, which were forward to EDSTAR in time for this final report. Of the 74, 67 used required forms which allowed overall computation. Of the $11.8 million awarded, final budgets totaling $9,861,090.34 were accounted for. About 10% of the reported funds were reverted (i.e., given back because they were unspent).

Accountability for grant funds is important. In the past, when EDSTAR was alerted to potential problems due to inconsistencies in monthly reporting or the excessive need for technical assistance, the NC Dropout Committee was alerted. When deemed necessary, monitoring visits were made to determine if lax fiscal stewardship was the cause. Although sometimes the agencies were simply confused and the visits

allowed NCDPI to educate staff on proper procedures, these visits also uncovered some improprieties with funds.

Conclusions

The 2009 dropout grants served approximately 25,797 students in 69 counties. Nearly 10,000 of these students were targeted for specific risk factors known to be more prevalent in students who drop out than those who don't. Although causation is not certain, since the Dropout Prevention Programs began, the rate of dropouts in North Carolina has steadily declined, reaching new lows since last year, and dropping below 4% for the first time ever in the 2009-2010 school year. Innovative dropout prevention programs used objective criteria for selection, offered online course recovery, had a positive and close rapport with parents, and an enthusiastic support staff who believed in the students' potential for success. The move toward using academic and behavioral data to better align services and document success has undoubtedly been a key factor in the decline of dropout rates.

Should funding become available, problems with the program that should be addressed are the lack of infrastructure to support data literacy. Although an infrastructure was set up in previous years, budget cuts reduced the availability of technical support and scrutiny required to ensure proper program management. Mandatory, uniform data collection forms facilitate reporting and allow program managers to oversee the program and address problems as they occur, but without constant diligence, complications due to non-compliance or misunderstandings may go unchecked. Despite these budgetary setbacks, the Dropout Prevention Program is providing North Carolina students with tools to help them grow and become productive, educated members of society. (See Appendix B for narratives of successful dropout programs.)

2009 Dropout Prevention Grant Recipients Program Evaluation Final Report

Description

In 2009, the General Assembly of North Carolina approved $11.8 million additional funding for dropout prevention, continuing Session Law 2007-323, which established the North Carolina Committee on Dropout Prevention (NCCDP). This funding was allocated to 83 agencies. Twenty-three of the grantees received the grant in 2007, 2008, and 2009. The Authorizing Legislation previously allowed the sum of $100,000 to be used to provide a contract to assist with the comprehensive evaluation of dropout prevention grants. This amount was reduced this year by 80% for a final and interim report.

Although the program experienced some difficulties in its initial years due to program management and capacity issues, most of these were alleviated when capacity checklists, technical assistance, and professional development were provided by NCDPI and EDSTAR, and monitoring visits were conducted by NCDPI for agencies that appeared to be faltering or unaware of processes required for program development. With processes in place to promote good information management, EDSTAR monitored progress with monthly submissions of data mandated by NCDPI, and NCDPI could intervene when necessary to ensure the smooth progression of the grant programs.

North Carolina's steadily increasing dropout rate finally began to decline as programs were implemented through the grant. The dropout rate fell from 5.24% in 2006-2007 to 4.97% in 2007-2008. More than half of North Carolina's Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) (57%) reported decreases, and every high school grade (9-12) was able to report a reduction in the number of dropouts. With the exception of multiracial students, all races and ethnic groups saw declines in the numbers and percentages of dropouts (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2008). In the 2008-2009 school year, the dropout rate fell again from 4.97% to 4.27%--the lowest dropout rate

ever recorded in North Carolina. A decrease in the dropout rate was reported in 84% of all school districts. For the 2009-2010 school year, North Carolina high school dropout rate fell yet again, to 3.75%. The actual numbers fell from 19,184 to 16,804 in grades 9-12, representing a 12.4% decrease. EDSTAR received reports from 78 of the 83 grant recipient agencies. These agencies reported that approximately 1,870 targeted students served graduated in June 2011, and over 9,800 are still in school working toward graduation.

North Carolina schools also saw a decrease in acts of crime and violence, and both short-term and long-term suspensions. The decrease in long-term suspensions fell 31.3% from the 2007-08 school year (5,225 incidents) to the 2008-2009 school year (3,592 incidents). It fell yet again in the 2009-2010 school year, to 3,368. High schools saw a 17.6% reduction. The number of expulsions fell precipitously, also, from 116 in 2008-2009 to 88 in 2009-2010. Short-term suspension also saw an 8.2% decrease during this same timeframe. (For specific details on the dropout and suspension incidents, see http://dpi.state.nc.us/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2009-10/consolidated-report.pdf .) Although a causal relationship between services provided through dropout prevention grants and the reduction in dropout numbers is not certain, the programs likely had some impact on this decline. As the dropout rate declined, the incidents of misbehavior declined with them. Many programs included services designed to improve behavior and reduce suspension, both of which may be attributable to the decline in those numbers as well.

Dropout prevention leadership and collaboration

The collaboration and successful implementation of funding for the dropout prevention grants involves the coordinated efforts of the North Carolina General Assembly, members of the NCCDP, members of the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation, and the NCDPI. Throughout the duration of the grant, the General Assembly has allocated funding and specified the

priorities to be addressed in awarding grant funds. The members of the NCCDP were appointed and serve the General Assembly's interests in making sure dropout funds and the process of awarding grants have appropriate oversight and leadership, adhere to the legislation, and receive a thorough evaluation to determine effectiveness. The Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation reviewed past grant evaluations and decided whether expanding or replicating dropout prevention funds would improve graduation rates. Additionally, the Commission examined research on student success, school reform efforts, and the suitability of required courses for graduation. The Commission also determined strategies best suited to help students remain in school when they are at risk of dropping out.

The NCDPI is the fiscal agent of the dropout prevention funds. The NCDPI also provides leadership to funded programs and facilitates the necessary technical training and centralized communication that are essential to documenting the work being done with dropout prevention funds.

Grantees for General Assembly of North Carolina's dropout prevention grant included LEAs, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), including non-profit and faith-based agencies; and universities or government agencies. (See Appendix A for a list of counties, organizations, and types.) Some grantees used their funding to enhance existing programs; others began new programs. Many grant-funded projects are part of a larger initiative paid for with a variety of resources. School systems, community volunteers, and other agencies provide resources to support programs. These resources range from full-time teachers and social workers to one-time guest speakers.

Evolution of the grant

In early October 2011, NCDPI contracted with EDSTAR to write this final report using the final program and budget data collected. Of the 83 agencies, 70 submitted final reports to the NCDPI, of which 49 complied with mandated reporting standards. Seventy-four of the 83 agencies turned in budgets in time for this final report. Of the 74,

67 used required forms which allowed overall computation. Of the $11.8 million awarded, final budgets totaling $9,861,090.34 were accounted for. About 10% of the funds accounted for were reverted (i.e., given back because they weren't spent). Much of the quantitative data are from the interim comprehensive evaluation provided in February 2011, when all agencies provided reports. The interim figures, with the exception of the budgets, provide a more accurate account of the grant since nearly all of the agencies complied with mandated reports at that time.

Since the 2008 grant-funding period, NCDPI began requiring SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) outcomes. Despite some drawbacks in program alignment with student needs and proper reporting, the improvements made throughout the years of the grant have been significant. The majority of the programs targeted students for factors that related to success in school and were measurable, and then provided services specifically designed to address those factors.

Because treating students for their membership in subgroups had been the traditional way programs have served students, introducing data as the main component of determining alignment of services has been innovative, and allowed for identifying some effective programs. Data literacy, i.e., the capacity to find and determine appropriate data and convert data into useful information, gives educators the ability to understand causes of underperformance and develop and implement improvement strategies. With technical assistance, most of the 2009 grantees had SMART outcomes that were articulated in such a way that made this apparent.

Grantees

Of the 83 agencies awarded the 2008 grants, 35 are LEAs, 13 are schools (including 2 colleges), 22 are non-government agencies, 7 are faith-based, and the other 6 include agencies such as social services and a local police department, as well as YMCAs and other institutions. Most grantees work in collaboration with other agencies

to provide a wider variety of services than grantees could provide alone. They solicit familiar institutions as partners such as 4H, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, YMCAs, YWCAs, and scout troops, as well as local churches and other organizations. Additionally, local agencies such as police departments were solicited for single lectures, and grantees that include career information often enlist the services of local businesses for lectures, job shadowing, and internships. The armed forces have also played a role in this year's programs.

Goals and objectives

Staff at each agency wrote their own SMART outcomes based on the needs of their particular program. Most addressed areas known to improve student behavior or academic performance—both factors that can affect dropout rates. In addition to reducing the dropout rate, the NCCDP wanted to identify effective practices that could serve as promising programs to be replicated. Effective programs were those in which staff looked at appropriate data for aligning services, kept relevant records so that outcomes could be documented, and provided services to help students satisfy graduation requirements. Innovative programs have been based on data literacy. Examples of such programs are provided at Appendix B.

Students served

The 2009 dropout grants served approximately 25,797 students in 69 counties. Of the 9,492 targeted students served, 54% were male and 46% were female. Most of the students served were in 9th grade. Some agencies also included services for pregnant girls and teen parents; 418 pregnant girls and teen parents were served. Figure 1 shows the reported races and genders of the targeted students served. (Some students may not have been reported by race or gender, thus making the numbers of students smaller than actual counts.)

Figure 1: Unduplicated Count of Targeted Students Served

Race	American Indian		Asian		Black		Hispanic		Multi racial		White	
Grade	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
K-5	0	0	0	0	87	93	13	20	1	8	115	102
6-8	9	8	8	13	896	786	179	171	82	32	627	483
9-12	85	75	12	8	1470	1127	406	375	64	55	1116	966
% of served	2%		0%		47%		12%		3%		36%	

The majority of students being served were in 9th grade. This is expected, as the transition to high school is frequently problematic and is where data can clearly identify which students are less likely to graduate.

Pregnancy or parenting responsibilities

Although pregnant and parenting teens are served in several of the programs, some programs have specifically designed their programs to serve these categories of students. Being a teen parent can be difficult, and trying to balance the demands of child-rearing with academics can be daunting for many teens. Some agencies provided parenting lessons, health care, counseling, and academic assistance. A total of 418 pregnant girls and teen parents are being served by the dropout grant.

Figure 2: Pregnancy and Parenting Responsibility

Grade Level	Pregnant at Enrollment	Female Teen Parent	Male Teen Parent
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	1
8	0	1	0
9	34	26	10
10	40	29	8

Grade Level	Pregnant at Enrollment	Female Teen Parent	Male Teen Parent
11	49	47	16
12	62	69	26
Total	185	172	61

How agencies acquired data

Of the 83 agencies with grant-funded programs, 239 SMART outcomes were submitted. Grantees were required to report how they acquired their data to determine which students to target, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the program. NC WISE, SAS® EVAAS®, and standardized test scores were common sources for academic outcomes. For behavior outcomes, most grantees used disciplinary or other appropriate data, such as numbers of absences or suspensions. For more subjective changes, such as self-esteem or student attitudes, grantees had had access to EDSTAR's web site, which offered many pre- and post-surveys. Although access was eliminated after budget cuts, most grantees could administer post-surveys based on surveys acquired prior to program changes. Grantees could also use surveys and resources from other agencies. Most of the grantees indicated that obtaining data was not difficult. Only 18, or 7.5% indicated some difficulty in obtaining data. These were the result of program transitions (from SIMS to NC WISE), or non-LEAs which had difficulty obtaining information from schools, usually when parent permission was needed or some other obstacle presented itself. Most indicated that school staff were helpful, although some could not provide data as quickly as they would have liked, usually because of demanding schedules. Those who obtained their data through computer programs, such as NC WISE or SAS® EVAAS® unanimously indicated that retrieving the data was easy.

Program descriptions

Agency staff reported their SMART outcomes, describing what data were used and how they were obtained (including obstacles encountered), and any highlights of the programs. With each SMART outcome that provided targeted services, agencies report the number of students served, and the number of students who met the benchmark outlined in the SMART outcomes. They also describe staffing, budget, how families were involved, and prevention services provided. Most of the grantees included highlights with their reports. These are some component or effect of their program of which they are particularly proud. The following examples of highlights submitted by different grant recipients provide individual vignettes of how important and life-changing the program can be.

Grant 12630: "The Class of 2011 graduated two students who were returning dropouts. One of those seniors served as a spokes model for our Dropout Prevention video that was shown at our Community Forums. She has been a role model and source of encouragement for students thinking about dropping out and for those students considering returning to high school for their diploma."

Grant 12896: "One of our Graduation Coaches was working with a homeless student on their senior project. The student wanted to do their project on drop-outs and the causes. The grad coach worked with this student to show them where to get the facts and figures. Helped him set up interviews and put the information together. The student put a power-point together and gave a presentation to the local middle school students in our afterschool programs. He also gave the presentation to the CIS board of directors. The presentation was so powerful that a representative from Cleveland County Schools asked if he could do a voice over on the presentation to be used for training of educators in Cleveland County. This was a true success."

Grant 15040: "One of our students is an ESL [English as a Second Language] student as well as an EC [Exceptional Children] student. She is a new mother, still

living at home with her parents and the child's father. Because of the individualized instruction she has received by being a part of the extended day program, she has completed the requirements for graduation this month and will be dual enrolled at the community college in the spring. She will be the first in her family to graduate from high school."

Grant 15028: "A young man whose parents did not complete high school graduated despite his learning disabilities. This young man did not repeat the generational cycle due to C-Stars efforts. His mother and father divorced, and the student lived with his father. The student sat through his first interview with the director and coordinator with his head down and making very little eye contact. He expressed that he would rather work at a local plant than achieve his high school diploma because he and his father were struggling financially. When he began attending the program, the instructors discovered he could not read or spell, but was excellent in computers and auto mechanics. Staff allowed him to bring in a carberaotuer and work on it during his class breaks. Just by staff acknowledging his strengths and interests, this young man flourished academically and socially. He became a leader in the program and assisted instructors and staff by encouraging his peers to stay on track and complete their school work. He assisted staff with computer issues and helped design a brochure for the program. The Graduation Coach and Director secured the student a job/internship with a local auto mechanic which helped him and his family financially. The student graduated last June and is now enrolled at the local community college studying Auto Mechanics through financial assistance provided through WIA (Workforce Initiative Act). He is excelling academically and continues to work as an auto mechanic with the job he secured as a C-STARS student.

"An ultimate highlight was graduating 27 young men and women last year from Alternative Learning center who had 'dropped out' of local high schools!"

Grant 14142: "E---- enrolled in the Adolescent Parenting Program in April 2007 at the age of 13, while attending Hendersonville Middle School. E----- has been an active participant since her enrollment almost four years ago. She has attend 42 of 47 offered group sessions and consistently meets with her Coordinator to make sure she reaches her goal of high school graduation. E----- is now a graduate with the class of 2011. She continues to inspire other teen moms and her classmates at school as she has challenged herself academically by taking honors classes, all while raising her son. E------ did her senior project on the effects of teen pregnancy. She spoke at many different community events to young women about the effect teen pregnancy has had on her life and how to prevent teenage pregnancy."

Grant 12874: "One of the field trips for the Why Try? motivation group was to NC State University and Duke University. All of the students in the group were 16 or would be turning 16 at some point during the school year. If they attended college, the students would be first-generation college students. The students had an opportunity to explain to staff and peers some of the difficulties they experienced growing up and some of the obstacles they were able to overcome. The students were awestruck by their experience at NCSU, some had never been outside of Johnston County. The students had never been on a college campus. On the ride home, students were ecstatic and talked about how they were going to college and how proud their parents would be. Before the trip, most of the students were failing academically and had accumulated numerous behavior referrals. After the trip, over 75% of the students are passing all of their classes--some made the honor roll--and suspensions have decreased substantially."

Grant 13146: "We first met P---- just after his freshman year in high school. Talk about sassy! He had a retort and inappropriate joke for everything. Clearly we had our hands full. We had our good days as well as our bad days, but as time went on, something began to happen: P--- grew up. He became a leader we knew we could count

on to model appropriate behavior and set a positive example. His jokes also took a turn for the better. Instead of shaking our heads and wagging our fingers, we laughed along with him. P--- kept our program fun and upbeat.

"Throughout his 3 years in program he has successfully completed the Y-Dub Tri Club Triathlon, as well as become a certified lifeguard. He's pushed through personal and educational obstacles and hasn't let anything set him back. We've seen his interests shift from goofing off to green energy and architecture. This young man is going places and we couldn't be more proud of him. He plans to attend school at AB-Tech and then transfer to a four-year college."

Grant 14214: "J---- is a student in the GRAD Guys program and has grown up in a very unstable home environment. Both parents are high school dropouts and are presently incarcerated. His maternal grandmother was granted guardianship, but she is limited in her ability to care for him due to financial constraints, driving restraints, and reported issues with alcohol abuse. As a result, he often takes on the role at home of care giver and head of the household. When he entered the program two years ago, he was very introverted and had very low self-esteem. J---- often communicated with the coordinators, but kept a distance from other students (during the school day and in the after-school program). At school he often reported that he was teased and bullied. Now, through the social support of the GRAD Guys staff, J---- has blossomed into a well rounded, outspoken young man. In the program, he often tutors other students to help them improve their grades. The coordinators often overhear him providing words of encouragement to other students who are struggling academically. He is viewed as a positive role model and mentor by his peers. He is not shy about sharing his life experiences with others to exemplify how others can overcome obstacles in their lives in order to succeed in school. He successfully completed his sophomore year with a 4.06 GPA and also excelled in team sports."

Staff

Most of the permanent staff in the agencies' programs were regular teachers from the students' schools. Research shows this is advantageous in programs in which students are served outside of regular school hours (Fashola, 1998). There are more volunteers (1,215) than paid workers (1,191) in the program. The figure for paid workers includes those paid with grant funds and those paid from other sources. Community members made up a large part of the volunteer component of the program. They provided services and products in a variety of ways. Some were guest speakers on career days; others provided ongoing services, such as dance or martial arts lessons. After community members, students provided the second largest cadre of volunteers. Participants, college students, and peers helped out throughout the program. Parents also pitched in, providing their services as chauffeurs, chaperones, tutors, mentors, and many other capacities in which they were needed. Figure 3 shows the type of staff that worked with the dropout prevention grants.

Figure 3: Types and Numbers of Staff

Type of Staff	Number Paid With Grant Funds	Number Paid With Other funds	Volunteers	Number Who Work Directly With Students
Teachers (including retired)	391	253	138	621
College Students	58	36	125	195
High School Students	7	3	195	213
Participants' Parents	1	0	243	151
Youth Development Worker	62	44	21	99
Community Members	49	11	486	372

Other	147	129	7	206
Total	715	476	1215	1857

Services provided

Most of the services were provided directly to the students in one or more of three types of programs. These were:

- Services provided to specific students or groups

- School-wide services

- Larger than school-wide

The latter two groups did not target specific students, and are considered "non-targeted" services. Although such services are beneficial, their outcomes are often more difficult to gauge than targeted services. An example of a non-targeted service would be installing computer software that all students can access. Some grants supported both a targeted component and a larger component. For example, allowing all students access to tutoring or course-recovery software programs might benefit many students, although targeted, participating students may be using the software under guidance and tutelage, with quantitative, measurable results. Other students may be reaping the benefits of the services, but those outcomes are not measured.

As previously indicated, all grantees were required to write SMART outcomes describing their measurable goals with timeframes; 81 of 83 complied. Nearly all (77) submitted SMART outcomes which addressed academics; 61% of all SMART outcomes addressed reading, math, general academics, or course recovery. Integration of social and behavioral skills (e.g., leadership, self-confidence, etc.) was another common area addressed through services to help students.

Figure 4: Percent of Grantees With These Categories of SMART Outcomes
(Each grantee submitted up to three.)

Category	Percentage of grantees addressing (N = 83)	Percent of outcomes addressing (N = 239)
General Academic Support	58%	26%
Attendance	43%	16%
Math	24%	8%
Reading	28%	10%
Suspensions	33%	12%
Connections/Personal Social	23%	9%
Credit Recovery	19%	9%
Other	19%	7%
Not SMART	6%	4%

Note: Figures in the first column may add to more than 100% because agencies had more than one SMART outcome.

According to grantees, 53% provided non-targeted services to their students, with 16,305 students reported as benefitting from these services. As previously discussed, determining the number of participants in such services is difficult, and figures are usually based on conjecture. The number of students who benefit from such services is likewise difficult to gauge. Benefits can be measured by comparing course failures and discipline incidents with previous cohorts of students, but this, too, involves guesswork. Given that the dropout rate and disciplinary incidents fell yet again from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010, we can speculate that non-targeted services played a role in this favorable decline.

Targeted services are those in which students are selected based on a criterion that may put them at risk for dropping out and provided services accordingly. The following figure shows the activities provided and the percentages of grantees that provide each activity.

Figure 5: Services Provided

Services	Percentage of grantees offering (N = 83)
Personal skills (e.g. leadership, self-confidence, etc.)	87%
Academic skill help	84%
Adult mentoring	67%
Recreational activities	51%
Peer tutoring	43%
Service learning	43%
Counseling groups	40%
Transition to high school programs	40%
Credit recovery	39%
Primary adult advocate	37%
Customized graduation plans	34%
Peer-based mentoring	31%
Other	30%
School-wide reform (e.g., professional development)	23%
Preparation for vocational or applied skills certificate programs	13%

Services	Percentage of grantees offering (N = 83)
On and off campus employment opportunities	7%

Note: Figures may add to more than 100% because agencies offer more than one service each.

Services provided to staff.

Before budget cuts, EDSTAR and NCDPI provided professional development and technical assistance to staff of participating agencies. Some agencies also provided their staff with training in key academic or behavior areas, or training specifically designed for a program they were implementing. Because SMART outcomes were designed to help the students improve, most of the services were provided to the students themselves. All staff were, of course, trained to learn the goals of their programs and how to implement activities. Volunteers were also provided training, such as those who tutor or mentor students.

Services provided to families.

Parents were involved in the dropout prevention program in a variety of ways. A few programs required parents to participate, and all welcomed their involvement. Many programs had some type of orientation or open house for parents. Services for parents varied, with some accessing community programs and encouraging parents to participate. For example, one grant recipient worked in partnership with North Carolina A&T State University in a Parenting Matters course, which taught parents skills and strategies to strengthen their relationships with their children, and how to advocate for their children to ensure they receive the best education possible. Another grant agency hosted a Community Resource Fair, allowing community partners to speak to parents about services available throughout their county. Many programs offered workshops for parents, providing them with tools to understand how they can help their children in their academic progress. Some parent services specialized in

specific topics, such as childhood obesity or keeping kids off drugs. Programs offered family nights, or some sort of celebration either periodically or toward the end of the school year, in which parents and students could come to honor students in the program. At these events, the students often exhibited many of the skills they were learning, such as dancing or martial arts. Artwork might be displayed, and children were recognized for academic or other achievements. Parents were invited with their children to hear local volunteers from different walks of life talk to students about career choices. Counselors taught parents how to help their children choose and apply to colleges. Several programs helped families of participating students through troubled times, providing clothing and provisions for the holidays. Some grantees offered transportation, childcare, and incentives such as dinner or door prizes at their events. Some encouraged parents to attend field trips with their children, and nearly all had an open-door policy, encouraging parents to attend and help out in any way.

Research

Education, now in a transition stage, is moving toward data-driven interventions and providing services based on what data tell us are the needs of individuals. What we have discovered, through this and other programs during our two decades of evaluating educational programs, is that successful grantees use objective criteria subject to change to target students for services. For example, students were targeted based on test scores, absenteeism, or disciplinary referrals rather than race or socioeconomic status. For this report, programs deemed "model programs" were selected for using innovative and "outside-the-box" strategies. These programs also used objective criteria for selection, offered online course recovery, had a positive and close rapport with parents, and an enthusiastic support staff who believed in the students' success. Research attests to these findings. The following are research items all grantees previously had access to on EDSTAR's web site, and which provided insight to factors that contribute to dropping out, and what has been shown to curtail dropout incidents.

- Dropping out is often a long-term, cumulative process, with risk factors present as early as 6th grade predicting whether a student completes school. In Philadelphia, it was found that a 6th grader with even one of the following four signals had at least a three in four chance of dropping out of high school:

  - A final grade of F in mathematics

  - A final grade of F in English

  - Attendance below 80 percent for the year

  - A final "unsatisfactory" behavior mark in at least one class (Neild, Balfanz, & Herzog, 2007).

- Through focus groups, interviews and surveys conducted with individuals who had dropped out of public high school, a recent study described the five top reasons dropouts identify as major factors for leaving school:

  - Classes were not interesting (47%)

  - Missed too many days and could not catch up (43%)

  - Spent time with people who were not interested in school (42%)

  - Had too much freedom and not enough rules in my life (38%)

  - Was failing in school (35%) (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006).

- In North Carolina, a study of a large school system's eighth and ninth grade students determined that ninth grade dropouts are more likely than the general population of students to possess at least one of three factors:

  - Retention in a grade or failing to have enough credits to enter tenth grade

  - Scoring below grade level on 8th grade EOG Math

  - A long-term suspension (Sparks, Johnson, & Akos, 2010).

- Students who repeated an early grade—from kindergarten through fourth grade—were almost 5 times as likely to drop out of school as those who had not repeated a grade. And students who had repeated a grade from fifth through eighth grade were almost 11 times more likely to drop out (Kaufman & Bradbury, 1992).

- Low attendance during the first 30 days of 9th grade is a more powerful predictor than any 8th grade factor for failing 9th grade, including test scores, age, and academic failure (Nield & Balfanz, 2006).

- Although research provides some guidelines, who drops out and why they drop out will vary not only across states and districts, but within school districts. To implement effective dropout prevention strategies, we must first learn whom to target in the particular problem area (Ahn, Wyant, Bonneau, Rosch, & Owen, 2008).

- Suspensions and dropout rates peak during the ninth grade year, a year of transition to high school and upheaval for the student (Newman, Lohman, Newman, Myers, & Smith, 2000).

- State-mandated promotion policies push more students out of school when such policies aren't combined with support for school improvement and personal attention to students who are at risk of dropping out (Dryfoos, 1990).

- Dropout prevention programs often serve students who are not likely to drop out, and they do not serve students who are more likely to drop out (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002).

- Schools with a freshman academy had a reduction in overall dropout rates and, specifically, lower dropout rates for Latino students when compared to similar schools without ninth grade academies (Zvock, 2006).

- Services provided to teen mothers, including the opportunity to enroll in an alternative high school that provided services such as child care and counseling following the birth of their child, may help lower the female dropout rate (Zvock, 2006).

- "Among programs that the What Works Clearinghouse has reviewed as having positive or potentially positive effects are those that use close monitoring strategies, increase partnerships with families, establish career-focused academies in schools, and offer additional support for academic and behavioral success and college entry" (Myint-U, O'Donnell, Osher, Petrosino, & Stueve, 2008).

- Schools which demonstrate frequent use of suspension have higher rates of dropouts than other schools (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004).

- Eliminating tracking has been found to be a key element in reducing the number of dropouts (Woods, 2001). Widespread participation in a high rigor curriculum helps all students do better in school and creates a school culture of high expectations where staff and students expect students to be prepared to go on to college (Education Trust-West, 2004).

- Students are more likely to stay in school if they believe their teachers support their efforts. This is especially true for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

- Teacher expectation of students has been shown to play a significant role in the academic achievement of students. When teachers expect students to deliver, they usually do (Jamar & Pitts, 2005).

When services are provided

Most of the grantees deliver their services during the school day (69%), although programs also take place after school and even in the summer. Summer programs are provided by 34% of the grantees, and usually include field trips, camping, or other activities in addition to services designed to improve academics or modify behavior.

Commercial components

Grantees used a variety of commercial programs to enhance their services to the students. Some commercial programs included workshops or lessons in which students and staff participated with the help of media products or programs designed to help students in particular areas, such as AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination), Check & Connect, or NEW (No Easy Walk). Many grantees incorporated commercial computer software into their programs, such as *Study Island, Orchard*, and *Accelerated Reader. NovaNET, ODYSSEYWARE, NCVPS* and other programs were used to recover credits.

Other commercially available programs were used in the dropout prevention programs. Although not all programs have been shown to prevent students from dropping out of school, many provide positive reinforcement which may contribute to factors which are more likely to help students improve academically and behaviorally—both factors which the What Works Clearinghouse espouses as important for dropout prevention (Dynarski et al., 2008).

Resource support

As previously reported, communities were an essential component of the dropout prevention program, providing many resources to enhance effectiveness and, indeed, to make the program possible. Some contributed modest, but essential donations. Others volunteered computers and other equipment, and some loaned facilities in which programs were held. Many volunteer organizations were availed by recipients, and individuals from the community volunteered their time, talent, and

expertise to teach and to talk with students. Through the years of the grant, as the community has come to know and appreciate what these programs are doing for the future of local citizenship, many more have been willing to provide support. Figure 6 shows the types of resources frequently reported and the percentage of programs reporting these for last year and this year.

Figure 6: Resources Used in Conjunction with Grant Funds

Resource	Percentage of programs (2008) (N = 123)	Percentage of programs (2009) (N = 83)
Facilities	77%	84%
Equipment	67%	83%
Paid staff from our agency	61%	77%
Short-term volunteers (one-time speakers or guests)	44%	64%
Services	24%	63%
Long-term volunteers (people who came in frequently to tutor or help out in any way)	37%	43%
Paid staff from outside agencies	38%	39%
Funds	34%	37%
Program Fees	Not reported	1%

Note: Percentages may add up to more than 100% due to programs reporting two or more of these.

Coordination to enhance effectiveness of existing programs

In answer to the question "Describe how the program or initiative was coordinated to enhance the effectiveness of existing programs, initiatives, or services in

the community," grantees detailed a number of ways of coordinating and a variety of synergistic effects. Some of the common ways reported as enhancing the effectiveness of existing programs are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Coordination to Enhance Effectiveness of Existing Programs, Initiatives, or Community Services

Activity	Percentage of grantees (N = 83)
Started new programs or added services that supported old programs	68%
Multi-agency coordination	60%
Professional development opportunities for staff of existing programs	58%
Trained volunteers	43%
Changed school culture	42%
Increased transportation for after-school activities	41%
Provided computer technology or online classes used beyond the scope of the program	41%
Changed school policies	17%

Note: Percentages may add up to more than 100% due to programs reporting two or more of these.

Budgets

Of the 83 agencies granted 2009 funds, 74 turned in budgets in time for this final report. (Agencies for which no budget report was received were 12806, 12822, 13320, 14028, 15004, 15026, and 15064.) Of the 74, 67 used required forms which allowed overall computation. Of the $11.8 million awarded, final budgets totaling $9,861,090.34 were accounted for. About 10% of these funds were reverted (i.e., given back because they were unspent). Figure 8 depicts how funds were spent.

Figure 8. How Reported Budget Funds Were Spent

Total Spent	Personnel & Contracted Services	Supplies & Materials	Non-Fixed Operating Expenses	Fixed Charges & Other Expenses	Property & Equipment Outlay	Services/ Contracts	Other Expenses
90.6%	61.1%	6.5%	6.7%	5.7%	6.4%	3.9%	0.6%

Most funding and spending occurred as planned and without incident. During the course of the grant, EDSTAR or NCDPI was occasionally alerted to potential budget problems. When deemed necessary, monitoring visits were made to determine if lax fiscal stewardship was the cause. Although sometimes the agencies were simply confused and the visits allowed NCDPI to educate staff on proper procedures, these visits also uncovered some improprieties with funds. NCDPI's diligence ensured proper budgeting took place, taking agencies to account when necessary.

Conclusions

The 2009 dropout grants served approximately 25,797 students in 69 counties. Nearly 10,000 of these students were targeted for specific risk factors known to be more prevalent in students who drop out than those who don't. Although causation is not certain, since the Dropout Prevention Programs began, the rate of dropouts in North Carolina has steadily declined, reaching new lows since last year, and dropping below 4% for the first time ever in the 2009-2010 school year. The 2009 grant recipients reported that approximately 1,870 targeted students they have served graduated in June 2011, and over 9,800 are still in school working toward graduation. Successful grantees used objective criteria that they could change in a student to target students for services. For example, students were targeted based on test scores, absenteeism, or disciplinary referrals rather than race or socioeconomic status. Model dropout prevention programs used objective criteria for selection, offered online course recovery, had a positive and close rapport with parents, and an enthusiastic support staff who believed in the

students' success. The move toward using academic and behavioral data, both factors that contribute to attrition or graduation, has undoubtedly been a key factor in the decline of dropout rates. (See Appendix B for narratives describing three successful 2009 grantee dropout programs.)

Clearly, the Dropout Prevention Program has affected the unprecedented decline in numbers of dropouts throughout the state, and raised awareness in the communities. Local agencies and individuals are now eager to participate as they understand the benefits to the community as a whole when the students have a proper education and are able to avail themselves to programs which will help them become productive citizens.

Problems with the program that should be addressed are the lack of infrastructure for data literacy. Although an infrastructure was set up in previous years, budget cuts reduced the availability of technical support and scrutiny required to ensure proper program management. Despite these budgetary setbacks, the Dropout Prevention Program is providing North Carolina students with tools to help them grow and become productive, educated members of society.

References

Ahn, T., Wyant, C., Bonneau, K., Rosch, J., & Owen, J. (2008). Dropout Prevention: Strategies for improving high school graduation rates: A briefing report prepared for the North Carolina Family Impact Seminar.   Retrieved July 9, 2008, from http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/familyimpact/2008_postseminar/NCFIS2008.pdf

Bridgeland, J. M., DiIulio, J. J., & Morison, K. B. (2006). The silent epidemic: Prospectives of high school dropouts.   Retrieved June 2, 2008, from http://www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/thesilentepidemic3-06.pdf

Croninger, R. G., & Lee, V. E. (2001). Social capital and dropping out of high school: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance. *Teachers College Record, 103*(4), 548-581.

Dryfoos, J. G. (1990). *Adolescents at risk: Prevalance and prevention*. Retrieved June 3, 2008, from http://books.google.com/books?id=aWQ0zhg52B8C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_summary_r&cad=0.

Dynarski, M., Clarke, L., Cobb, B., Finn, J., Rumberger, R., & Smink, J. (2008). Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide (NCEE 2008–4025).   Retrieved October 2, 2010, from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dp_pg_090308.pdf

Education Trust-West. (2004). The A-G curriculum: College Prep? Work prep? Life prep: Understanding and implementing a rigorous curriculum for all.   Retrieved June 27, 2008, from http://www2.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/25B673DE-1D3C-4293-8EBE-855B6E6386EE/0/AG_Guide_2004_final.pdf

Fashola, O. S. (1998). Review of extended-day and after-school programs and their effectiveness. Report no. 24. Retrieved February 6, 2008, from http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techreports/report24.pdf

Gleason, P., & Dynarski, M. (2002). How can we help? What we have learned from evaluations of federal dropout-prevention programs. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 7*(1), 25-41.

Jamar, I., & Pitts, V. R. (2005). High expectations: A "How" of achieving equitable mathematics classrooms. *The Negro Educational Review, 56*(2 & 3), 127-134.

Kaufman, P., & Bradbury, D. (1992). Characteristics of at-risk students in NELS:88. Retrieved February 12, 2008, from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs92/92042.pdf

Lehr, C. A., Johnson, D. R., Bremer, C. D., Cosio, A., & Thompson, M. (2004). Essential tools: Increasing rates of school completion: Moving from policy and research to practice: A manual for policymakers, administrators, and educators.   Retrieved July 9, 2008, from http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/dropout/dropout.pdf

Myint-U, A., O'Donnell, L., Osher, D., Petrosino, A., & Stueve, A. (2008). Piloting a searchable database of dropout prevention programs in nine low-income urban school districts in the Northeast and Islands Region (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2008-No. 046).   Retrieved July 10, 2008, from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2008046.pdf

Neild, R. C., Balfanz, R., & Herzog, L. (2007). An early warning system [Electronic Version]. *Educational Leadership*, 65, 28-33. Retrieved July 10, 2008 from http://www.jhsph.edu/preventyouthviolence/Test/An%20early%20warning%20system.pdf.

Newman, B. M., Lohman, B. J., Newman, P. R., Myers, M. C., & Smith, V. L. (2000). Experiences of urban youth navigating the transition to ninth grade. *Youth & Society, 31*(4), 387-416

Nield, R. C., & Balfanz, R. (2006). An extreme degree of difficulty: The educational demographics of urban neighborhood high schools.   Retrieved July 9, 2008, from http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=gse_pubs

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2008). Dropout Report 2007-2008. Retrieved February 11, 2009, from http://dpi.state.nc.us/docs/research/dropout/reports/2008/0708report.pdf

Sparks, E., Johnson, J. L., & Akos, P. (2010). Dropouts: Finding the needles in the haystack [Electronic Version]. *Educational Leadership*, 87, 46-49. Retrieved September 10, 2011 from http://www.educationnews.org/ed_reports/edu_assoc_articles/50322.html.

Woods, E. G. (2001). Reducing the dropout rate. *School Improvement Research Series* Retrieved June 3, 2008, from http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/9/c017.html

Zvock, K. (2006). Freshman year dropouts: Interactions between students and school characteristics and student dropout status. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 11*(1), 97-117.

Appendix A

Organizations Funded in 2009

County	Organization	Type
Anson	Anson County Schools	LEA
Ashe	Ashe County High School	School
Avery	Avery County Schools	LEA
Beaufort	Beaufort County Ed Tech Center - Beaufort County Schools	LEA
Beaufort	Purpose of God Annex Outreach Center	Faith Based
Bladen	Bladen County School System	LEA
Brunswick	Communities In Schools of Brunswick County, Inc.	NGO
Buncombe	YWCA of Asheville	NGO
Buncombe	Buncombe County Schools	LEA
Buncombe	Asheville City Schools	LEA
Burke	Hallyburton Academy	School
Cabarrus	Communities In Schools of Cabarrus County	NGO
Cabarrus	Kannapolis City Schools	LEA
Caldwell	Caldwell County Schools	LEA
Carteret	Communities In Schools of Carteret County	NGO
Catawba	Hickory Public Schools	LEA
Chatham	Chatham County Schools	LEA
Chowan	Edenton-Chowan Schools	LEA
Cleveland	Communities In Schools of Cleveland County	NGO
Columbus	Building Bridges	NGO
Craven	Craven County Schools	LEA
Cumberland	Cumberland County Schools	LEA
Cumberland	Fayetteville State University	School
Davidson	Communities In Schools of Lexington/Davidson County, Inc.	NGO
Davidson	Thomasville City Schools	School
Duplin	DREAMS Center for Arts Education	NGO
Duplin	Duplin County Schools	LEA
Durham	Durham Housing Authority	Govt. Agency

County	Organization	Type
Durham	Durham Academy	NGO
Durham	Durham Center of NC Cooperative Extension	Govt. Agency
Edgecombe	ST. Luke Total Community Outreach Ministry	Faith Based
Forsyth	Communities In Schools of Forsyth County	NGO
Forsyth	Word of Truth Int'l Life Center	Faith Based
Forsyth, Guilford Rockingham	God's Grace Ministries	Faith Based
Franklin	Franklin County Schools	LEA
Gaston	Gaston County Schools	LEA
Gaston	Alliance for Children & Youth	NGO
Gaston	Gates County School System	LEA
Granville	Granville County Schools	LEA
Granville, Sampson Tyrrell, Yadkin	NC State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	College/University
Guilford	Ebenezer Baptist Church	Faith Based
Halifax	Together Transforming Lives, Inc	Faith Based
Halifax	Halifax County Schools	LEA
Halifax, Warren	C.A.R.E./Child Abuse Resource and Education	Faith Based
Harnett	Harnett County Schools	LEA
Haywood	Haywood County Schools	School
Henderson	Children & Family Resource Center	NGO
Hertford	Hertford County Public Schools	School
Iredell	Iredell Statesville Schools	LEA
Iredell	Statesville Housing Authority	Govt. Agency
Jackson	Jackson County Public Schools	LEA
Johnston	Johnston County Schools	LEA
Macon	Macon County Schools	LEA
Madison	Madison County Schools	School
Mecklenburg	Urban Restoration & First Baptist Church	NGO
Mecklenburg	University of North Carolina at Charlotte	College/University
Mecklenburg	Zebulon Vance High School (CMS)	School
Mitchell	Mitchell County Schools Dept of Social Services	LEA
Montgomery	Communities In Schools of Montgomery County	NGO
Nash	Rocky Mount Family YMCA, INC.	NGO
Onslow	Onslow County Schools	LEA
Pasquotank	Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	LEA
Perquimans	Perquimans County Schools	LEA

County	Organization	Type
Pitt	Pitt County Schools	LEA
Pitt	City of Greenville Police Department	Govt. Agency
Pitt	Communities In Schools of Pitt County	NGO
Randolph	Communities In Schools of Randolph County	NGO
Robeson	Public Schools of Robeson County	LEA
Rockingham	Rockingham County Youth Services	Govt. Agency
Rowan	Jesse Carson High School	School
Rowan	Communities In Schools of Rowan County	NGO
Sampson	Lakewood High School	LEA
Stanly	Stanly County Schools	LEA
Swain	Swain County Schools	School
Union	Union County Public Schools	LEA
Wake	Reaching Your Goals, Inc.	NGO
Wake	Kraft Family YMCA	NGO
Watauga	The Children's Council of Watauga County	Govt. Agency
Wayne	Dillard Academy Charter School	School
Wilson	Opportunities Industrialization Center of Wilson	NGO
Wilson	Getting Ready Inc	NGO
Wilson	Wilson County Schools	LEA
Yancey	Yancey County Schools	LEA

Appendix B

Examples of Promising Dropout Programs

14204 The Children's Council of Watauga County

Staff described the program as follows: "Our program is a wraparound, interagency approach to working with pregnant and parenting teens. Building on our initial proposal, the 2009 Continuation grant allows us to offer intensive case management, in-home parenting education (Parents as Teachers curriculum), monthly groups (on and off campus), free use of our teen-focused lending library, teen childbirth classes, doula services for teens, transportation services, as well as outreach to families and a special fatherhood component. We are currently working with our local youth agency, Western Youth Network, and have developed a teen parent mentoring program, similar to the well-known 'Big brother, Big sister' program. We also provide free transportation to group meetings, school functions, and appointments through a contract with our public transportation agency. All of our teens are eligible for free medical care through the health department and we maintain a close relationship with staff to make sure they are keeping appointments."

Girls in the program are provided with customized graduation plans, and their mentors and other adults in the program help them through the challenge of pregnancy, raising a child, and staying in school. They reach out to girls who have already dropped out due to pregnancy, as well as those who are in school but may be planning to drop out. They offer an on-site GED program, and provide transportation and childcare. Credit recovery is used to help the students graduate.

SMART Outcome 1: By the end of the school year 2010-2011, 90% of pregnant students at Watauga High School will return to school after the birth of their baby and continue their education.

Students served/successes: 15/16 (94%)

SMART Outcome 2: 75% of pregnant or parenting students served by one of our partner agencies who have already dropped out of school will set an educational goal and return to complete their education during pregnancy for the baby's first year of life.

Students served/successes: ¾ (75%)

15046 Lakewood High School

This program served two high schools and two middle schools. Staff described the program as follows: "The Peer Group Connection high school transition program is an evidence-based model that provides a continuum of support as they transition from middle to high school. Developed by the Princeton Center for Leadership Training, this multi-tiered model taps into the power of older students during the critical transition period. Freshmen participate in group mentoring sessions facilitated by peer leaders to learn the connection between attendance and schoolwork and their impact on graduation. Through session activities, students develop and practice skills such as goal setting, problem solving, decision making, negotiation, refusal, feedback, time management, and teamwork. The program addresses skills that are essential for students' academic and social success, both of which are critical factors for improving. . . . . Family Night events . . . focus on increasing parent/child communication, increasing involvement in their child's education, and equipping parents with resources to reinforce the skill that their children are learning."

The program addressed absenteeism, disciplinary referrals, and academics. Mentors and tutors were well trained. Parents were an integral part of the program. Students were selected based on prior records, and provided with appropriate services.

SMART Outcome 1: By the end of the spring semester 2011, 75% of the program participants who were absent from school for sixteen or more days during eight grade

and who attended 70% of the PGC mentoring sessions during ninth grade will have fewer the eight absence during the both semesters of their ninth grade year.

Student successes/served: 178/192 (93%)

SMART Outcome 2: By the end of the spring semester 2011, 75% of the program participants who had three or more office/disciplinary action during eight grade and who attended 70% of the PGC mentoring sessions during the ninth grade will have fewer than three office/disciplinary referrals that result in disciplinary action during their ninth grade year.

Student successes/served: 178/192 (93%)

SMART Outcome 3: By the end of the spring semester 2011, 75% of the program participants who had two or more failing grader during eight grade and who attended 70% of the PGC mentoring sessions during ninth grade will have fewer than two failing grades during the fall and spring semester.

Student successes/served: 175/192 (91%)

Model Programs Update

12622 Pathways, Beaufort County Schools/Beaufort Co. Ed Tech Center
Staff described the program as follows: "The goal of the Pathways program was to provide students who had dropped out of school or who were at the greatest risk of dropping out of school due to credit deficiencies with an alternate route to earning the credits required to attain a high school diploma. The program targeted students enrolled in the district's three high schools who had earned 50% or fewer of the credits attempted since entering high school, as well as students who previously dropped out and wished to resume their education. Applications to the program were available online, at the Ed Tech Center, and in our schools throughout the district. The application process included an analysis of a student's academic transcript to determine

the number of credits earned as well as a personal interview. Pathways could serve approximately 100 students per year with its current resources and staff."

Pathways staff chose to include students who had already dropped out of school, and bring them back to help them graduate. They did this despite the fact that the dropout percentages for their community would not change because of these students. But they felt it was the right thing to do. Their program has changed their community, turning a disreputable school into one students are eager to attend and the community can be proud of. Their benchmarks were set high, and, although they did not meet the first one, they far exceeded their third one, and all of their results are commendable.

SMART Outcome 1: By the end of the current school year, 75% of students participating in Pathways who previously failed a required math course will earn credit for a required math course and make progress toward meeting graduation requirements.

Student successes/served: 41/64 (64%)

SMART Outcome 2: By the end of the current school year, 75% of students participating in Pathways who previously failed a required English course will earn credit for a required English course and make progress toward meeting graduation requirements.

Student successes/served: 60/81 (74%)

SMART Outcome 3: By the end of the current school year, 75% of students participating in Pathways who previously failed a required course other than math or English will earn credit for a required course other than math or English and make progress toward meeting graduation requirements.

Student successes/served: 81/86 (94%)

12662 Edenton-Chowan Schools

Staff described the program as follows: "The best practice basis of our proposed Life Coach program is the Check & Connect model developed in a partnership between the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis Public Schools, Dakota County Community Services and area public schools. It is one of only eleven programs that made the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Dropout Prevention "What Works Clearinghouse" Report (www.whatworks.ed.gov). In this stringent program review, Check & Connect was the only program of the eleven that obtained an unqualified Positive Effects rating (strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence) on any of the three dropout prevention domains. Adapting the Check & Connect Model to our school system, we will follow a comprehensive approach to keeping students in school. Key features utilized are interrelated and include: Relationship Building: Mutual trust and open commitment focused on students' educational success; Routine Monitoring of Alterable Indicators: Systematic checking warning signs that can be altered (attendance, academic performance, behavior, extracurricular activities); Timely Intervention: Support for individual needs; Problem Solving: promote acquisition of skills to resolve conflict; Persistence: consistency in the message the 'education is important for your future'; affiliation with school and learning: facilitating students' access to and participation in academic intervention and other school related activities; and Long-term commitment: a commitment to students and families for at least two years of following them and working toward their success."

Edenton-Chowan has been using Check & Connect for all years of the grant, and with great success. Although they have fallen slightly shy of their benchmarks this year, the benchmarks were high and the progress they have made is commendable (for one SMART outcome, they exceeded their goal). The diligence the Life Coaches in their program used to ensure students came to school and understood the importance of

academic excellence was impressive. They also had a close connection with family members of the students.

SMART Outcome 1: By the end of spring semester 2011, 80% of students enrolled in the Life Coach Program for a minimum of one semester, who had passed less than 75% of their courses in the semester prior to enrolling in the program will have increased the percentage of courses passed.

Student successes/served: 61/82 (74%)

SMART Outcome 2: By the end of spring semester 2011, 75% of the participants enrolled in the Life Coach Program for a minimum of one semester, who were absent 15 or more days the semester prior to enrolling in the program will be absent fewer than 11 days.

Student successes/served: 35/56 (63%)

SMART Outcome 3: By the end of spring semester 2011, 75% of the participants enrolled in the Life Coach Program for a minimum of one semester, who had 2 or more OSS in the year prior to enrolling in the program will have fewer out-of-school suspensions in the 2010 school year.

Student successes/served: 14/17 (82%)

13062 Harnett County Schools

Staff described the program as follows: "Harnett County Schools continue to make every effort to reduce current dropout rates and re-admit current dropouts for credit recovery. The district has continued the Credit Recovery Program (CRP) implemented January 2008 through NovaNet, a comprehensive, online courseware system designed for students in grades 6-12 that meet countless needs with regard to a student's curriculum. Four Credit Recovery Teachers were employed, one at each high school, to work closely with students on a daily basis that is considered at-risk. A

percentage (33.67%) of a business position is utilized at STAR Academy, our alternative school, one class period a day for credit recovery. The Peer Tutoring Program continues to function in conjunction with the Credit Recovery Program at the high schools. This program is utilized as a prevention program for students at high risk for dropping out.

"Harnett reduced its number of reported dropouts by 76, from 372 in 2006-07 to 296 in 2007-08. This was the 5th largest dropout count reduction in the state. Our dropout rate decreased 21%, from 6.53% in 2006-07 to 5.16%. In 2008-09, the dropout rate decreased from 296 to 240 [representing a 4.15% dropout rate]. In 2009-10, the dropout rate increased by 66 students. [Note: 5.12% of students dropped out, a slight increase from the previous year, but still lower than the 2006-2007 year.] An increase in student population due to BRAC was a major contributor to the increase in dropout rate. [BRAC is related to a large influx of military families at Fort Bragg, a major military base located in Harnett County.] The successes in reduction can be attributed to our credit recovery and short-term suspension programs."

Harnett County's dropout program has made great strides toward reducing the dropout rate from double-digit percentage points to much lower figures. Both of their SMART outcomes address academics. Although they fell slightly shy of their benchmarks, they have helped many students graduate who otherwise might not have. Their parent involvement program is very strong, and through this, they have greatly improved staff/family relationships. They also reach out to students who have left school due to pregnancy and helped them return and graduate.

SMART Outcome 1: By the end of the school year, 85% of the students who have taken Algebra I or Geometry and failed will pass Algebra I or Geometry.

Student successes/served: 103/156 (66%)

SMART Outcome 2: By end of school year 2010, 90% of the students who had failed one or more courses will recover the credits back and be on track for graduation.

Student successes/served: 530/596 (89%)