

Nearly a quarter of our nation's high school students fail to graduate within four years, and many of them don't graduate at all. Unfortunately, there are few opportunities for these young people to reengage with education and earn their high school diploma.

Gateway to College National Network strives to build the capacity of states, colleges, and school districts to expand educational opportunities for high school dropouts and over-age, under-credited high school students. Part of our work includes encouraging policy and regulatory changes to ensure that Gateway to College and other alternative education models are available in every community that needs them.

To effectively reengage off-track and dropped out students, states need a comprehensive and integrated system that provides a variety of pathways to a high school credential that connects to postsecondary education or career training. Presented here are ten recommendations to help states create strong, comprehensive dropout prevention and reengagement strategies based on a select set of favorable policies in effect in other states.

1. *Provide access to high school educational opportunities for disengaged students*

States should create statutory frameworks that ensure access to a variety of dropout reengagement programs for students who have already dropped out of high school and for those students who are off-track to graduate. (Washington HB 1418, 2010)

2. *Link dropout reengagement programs to postsecondary education*

Encouraging partnerships with postsecondary institutions to provide dropout reengagement programs ensures that students receive age-appropriate educational opportunities linked to high school, college, and career readiness standards. State policies should ensure dual enrollment eligibility is not limited to high achieving students. Dropout reengagement programs should provide access to a broad range of dual enrollment opportunities. (Washington HB 1418, 2010)

3. *Create sustainable funding options for dropout reengagement and dual enrollment programs*

State policy should establish uniform financial reimbursement rates as part of a funding formula that provides sufficient and sustainable funding for comprehensive educational and wraparound supports to high school dropouts. (Washington HB 1418, 2010; Texas SB 975, 2011)

4. *Increase the age at which a student stops receiving state funding to complete a high school diploma*

Funding students' high school education beyond age 21 will increase opportunities for older dropouts to reengage in high school through programs on postsecondary campuses. (Texas HB 1137, 2007)

5. *Fund developmental education courses for high school credit in dropout reengagement programs*

Disengaged students returning to school need additional, sometimes remedial, support to become college ready. States should fund developmental education courses, aligned with high school content standards, as dual enrollment courses for students in dropout reengagement programs. (Washington WAC 392-700-065)

- 6. *Ensure courses taken for postsecondary credit count for high school graduation requirements***
Students enrolling in a postsecondary institution to complete a high school diploma should be guaranteed high school credits for all college courses. In addition, states should create articulation agreements to ensure the courses transfer among public institutions of higher education. (Colorado Revised Statute 22-35-104(5); Colorado Revised Statute 23-1-108(7))
- 7. *Allow flexibility in regulations to enable high school programs to adopt proficiency-based strategies***
States should provide flexibility around instructional time, allowing schools to award credit to students for demonstrated mastery and proficiency of content area standards in lieu of meeting minimum seat time requirements. (Georgia HB 186, 2011)
- 8. *Provide alternative attendance taking policies for dropout reengagement programs***
Students in dropout reengagement programs, and those attending courses on a college campus, are not expected to attend classes on a regular K-12 schedule. States should establish flexible attendance reporting policies for dropout reengagement programs to ensure students are fully counted in FTE calculations. (Arizona SB 1303, 2011)
- 9. *Remove accountability barriers for school districts reenrolling dropouts***
Districts and schools hesitate to reenroll high school dropouts if they may have a negative effect on accountability ratings. States can remove those barriers through alternative accountability systems for dropout reengagement programs. (Arizona SB 1303, 2011)
- 10. *Provide for wraparound student supports in dropout reengagement programs***
Disengaged students returning to school need additional supports to be successful. Programs must provide for additional and appropriate supports, such as tutoring, counseling, and college readiness courses. (Washington WAC 392-700-085)

Example State Dropout Reengagement and Recovery Policies: Arizona SB 1303, 2011; Illinois SB 1796, 2009; Ohio SB 311, 2007; Texas SB 975, 2011; Washington HB 1418, 2010

Example State Proficiency Policies: Georgia HB 186, 2011; Oregon OAR 582-022-1131; Ohio SB 311, 2007