

DROPOUT PREVENTION/RECOVERY	
<p>DISTRICT Cypress-Fairbanks ISD <i>Recognized 2007-08</i></p> <p><i>Promising Practices District, Dropout Recovery Resource Guide¹</i></p>	<p>PROGRAM SUMMARY</p> <p>The goal of Cypress-Fairbanks ISD's program is to support at-risk students in completing high school.</p> <p>Key strategies include a focus on early interventions and campus teams to support dropout recovery.</p> <p>Outcomes include higher completion rates than the state average.²</p> <p>EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>The district's overall completion rate was consistently above the state average over the last four years. In 2006-07, the most current year for which AEIS completion data were available, the district's completion rate (Completion Rate I without GED, which is used as a standard accountability indicator) was 96%, compared to the state average of 87%. The district's completion rate without GED for at-risk students was 93%, compared to the state average for at-risk students of 79%. Completion Rate I for other Cypress-Fairbanks student groups³ was above the state average for the groups across the four-year period analyzed. For example, in 2006-07, the completion rate (without GED) for African American students was 95%, compared to the state average for African American students of 81%. For Hispanic students, the district completion rate was 94%, compared to the state average of 82%; for White students, the completion rate was 97%, compared to the state average of 92%; for economically disadvantaged students, the completion rate was 91%, compared to the state average of 81%; and for students identified for Limited English Proficient (LEP) programs, the district completion rate was 88%, compared to the state average of 65%.</p>

¹ Information from 30 Texas districts and charter schools identified as having promising practices aligned with national dropout recovery research is included in TEA's Dropout Recovery Resource Guide (2008). For details, see http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/PDF/dropout_recovery_resource_guide.pdf.

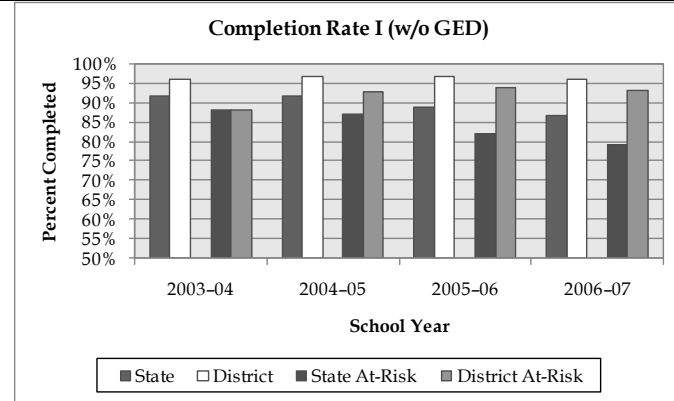
² Note: According to the 2007-08 AEIS Glossary: "Dropouts are counted according to the dropout definition in place the year they drop out. The definition changed in 2005-06. Completion rates for classes in which the national dropout definition is being phased in (i.e., classes of 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009) are not comparable to completion rates for the class of 2005 and prior classes, nor to each other."

³ Data are reported for student groups representing more than 10% of the total student population.

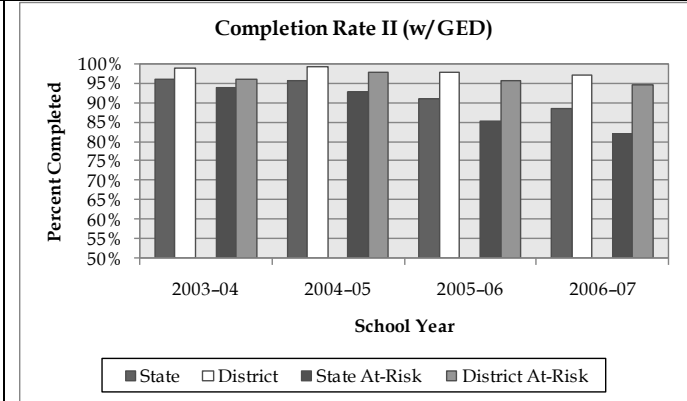
Please take one minute to answer the feedback survey (six questions).

[Best Practices Feedback Survey](#)

Overall district completion rates with GED (Completion Rate II) were also consistently higher than the state average. In 2006-07, the district's completion rate with GED was 97%, compared to the state average of 89%. The district's completion rate with GED for at-risk students was 95%, compared to the state average for at-risk students of 82%. For other student groups, Completion Rate II was also above the state average for the groups across the four-year period analyzed.



Source: AEIS



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CONTEXT/IMPLEMENTATION

Demographics (2007-08)

Grade Levels Served		ECE-12	District Enrollment		96,546
Ethnic Distribution			Economically Disadvantaged		
African American	14,672	15.2%	Limited English Proficient (LEP)	34,488	35.7%
Hispanic	35,814	37.1%	At-Risk	15,939	16.5%
White	37,501	38.8%		43,479	45.0%
Native American	271	.3%			
Asian/Pacific Islander	8,288	8.6%			

Source: AEIS

Background

- The district began implementing proactive dropout prevention programming beginning in the late 1990s, adding several new components in more recent years.

*Procedures*Early Interventions

- Academic Achievement Specialists were assigned to each middle and high school campus. These specialists worked with a district Academic Achievement Coordinator in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. The specialists met as a group with the district coordinator once a month for one-half day to receive training in the district's data monitoring tools, personal graduation planning software, processes related to the Student Success Initiative (SSI) and the district's Grade Placement Committee (GPC), and Response to Intervention. The campus-based specialists reported to campus leaders and worked closely with counselors and the dean of instruction to provide proactive dropout prevention services, monitor student progress, conduct conferences with students, work with teachers, and collect data on interventions.
- The campus-based specialists tailored academic options for students identified as struggling, including strategies such as:
 - re-enrollment in a failed course with a different, "hand-picked" teacher;
 - participation in TAKS support classes (online or direct teach);
 - credit-by-exam; or
 - credit recovery.
- The specialists also assigned a staff mentor to each identified struggling student and usually tried to choose a mentor with whom the student already had an established relationship. The mentor met with the student on a regular basis during the school day (at lunch, before school, or after school) and monitored the student's attendance, grades, benchmark test scores, and TAKS scores.
- The district began implementing a required year-long ninth-grade study skills course at each high school campus in the late 1990s. The course provided study skills and note-taking strategies based on the Quantum Learning program (for details, see http://learningforum.com/what_is_quantum_learning.html). Teachers certified in reading/English Language Arts (ELA) taught the course and worked with students on goal setting, reading in the content areas, and four-year course-taking plans.

- In 2005-06, the district also began offering a districtwide intervention for middle and high school students who had failed TAKS in mathematics and/or science. At the beginning of the school year, each campus identified students who had not passed TAKS in these two subject areas for participation in a three-day workshop offered in the fall. The workshop was developed by district mathematics and science specialists and curriculum coaches and provided opportunities for re-teaching and extending instruction for deeper content understanding.
- In 2006-07, the district required students who had not passed the third administration of eighth-grade reading TAKS to enroll in a Read 180 course during their freshman year (for details, see <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/read180/>). The course was offered in a two-block period to groups of 15 students in a classroom with computers and equipment to support the program. Class began with direct teaching, and then students broke out into three groups. One group worked on computer exercises designed to build fluency and vocabulary. A second group read and listened to leveled books on headsets. The books on tape provided metacognitive “think alouds” or reflection questions to support the reading process. The third group worked with a teacher for individualized support on comprehension and fluency needs. Staff reported that the program was engaging for at-risk readers.
- In 2008-09, the district implemented credit recovery programs at each high school campus with a focus on ninth graders with credit deficiencies. Credit recovery was offered in staffed computer labs called Success Through Academic Recovery or STAR labs using the PLATO system (for details, see <http://www.plato.com/Secondary-Solutions/Credit-Recovery.aspx>). STAR lab teachers were certified in one of the core content areas, most typically reading/ELA and mathematics, as staff reported that these were the two highest need content areas, which required the most teacher support. STAR lab teachers interviewed and developed relationships with referred students and provided additional academic and emotional support. Most campuses also developed strategies for providing supplemental academic support in the content areas in which the STAR lab teacher was not certified. For example, at one campus where the STAR lab teacher was certified in reading/ELA, the mathematics department assigned staff to report to the STAR lab 3-4 periods a day during either team planning or conference periods to provide additional academic support for students working through the PLATO mathematics program. Students were scheduled into the STAR lab in lieu of taking another elective course.
- Students participating in credit recovery through STAR labs simultaneously enrolled in the next course level. For example, if a student failed English I, the student enrolled in English II, while working to gain the English I credit through the STAR lab during an elective period. Teachers staffing the STAR labs supported the student in both the English I and II coursework.

- In 2008-09, the district implemented an Algebra Lab course at each high school campus for students who had failed the eighth-grade mathematics course or the third administration of eighth-grade mathematics TAKS. These students were promoted to ninth grade with the agreement that the student had to take Algebra I and the Algebra Lab (which was offered for local credit, not credit toward graduation). The lab class provided support with a different teacher and different student groupings from the regular Algebra I class the student was enrolled in and offered the student more time for in-depth study. The curriculum for the lab paralleled and extended the regular algebra curriculum. For example, if an objective was explored using a manipulative with practice on five examples in the regular class, the lab class provided review of the objective and the opportunity to practice the concept with 10-12 additional examples. Based on the success of the lab class in helping ninth graders pass Algebra I, the district developed a geometry lab class for tenth graders to be implemented in 2009-10. Lab classes were taken as electives.
- The district also operated an alternative high school, or “campus of choice,” for students in Grades 11-12 (Windfern High School). The campus environment was designed like a community college with two-hour, nine-week courses, a silent bell system, small class sizes, open lunch, flexible scheduling, and self-paced courses. Classes were offered from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Students applied for admission with recommendations from their home campus assistant principal and counselor and worked toward graduation based on individualized graduation plans. Alternative academic options included credit-by-exam, computer-based instruction, and correspondence courses, with individualized tutoring support as necessary. The campus typically served 300-350 students, and the number of students per teacher was 12.7 in 2007-08, compared to the state average of 14.5. The campus philosophy was based on establishing close, caring relationships between students and teachers and developing students’ sense of belonging. Additional instructional programming offered at the campus targeted students with a variety of needs/interests, including the following:
 - teen parenting support;
 - hotel/restaurant management and training;
 - apprenticeships and business mentoring;
 - ESL instruction; and
 - GED tutorials.

Dropout Recovery

- To track and recover students who might have dropped out, the district’s attendance officers worked closely with a dropout recovery liaison on each middle and high school campus. These campus-level dropout recovery specialists, often an assistant principal or another campus-identified staff member, led teams of campus staff (counselors, assistant principals, principals, PEIMS coordinators, registrars, and academic achievement

specialists) in tracking students who did not return to school at the beginning of the year during the “school-start window,” which typically extends from the first day of school through the last Friday in September. Each member of the team was responsible for a portion of the list of non-returning students and called all known contact numbers for the student or next-of-kin. If students could not be located through phone calls, the campus sent letters and also tried to contact either siblings or known friends of the student to find out if the student had dropped out, moved, or pursued some other educational option. Located dropouts were referred to campus academic achievement specialists for alternative academic support options. The campus PEIMS coordinators updated leaver codes for those students who had moved out of the district or state.

- The district and all high schools also participated in an annual regional “Reach Out to Dropouts Walk” (for details, see <http://www.expectationgraduation.org>) that took place at the start of the school year (September), with volunteers visiting the homes of students who had not returned to school.
- Staff also reported that the district had participated in a partnership with the county District Attorney’s Office called the Stay in School program for one year with support from a county grant in 2007-08 (for details, see <http://app.dao.hctx.net/CrimePrevention/StayInSchool.aspx>). Through the program, the District Attorney’s Office sent a school-initiated warning letter to parents after three unexplained student absences, which staff reported was more effective than a letter from the district. If absences continued, the parent and student were then required by the court to participate in a collaborative meeting with county officials to discuss barriers to student attendance and referrals for support. Subsequent actions could include parent participation in court-ordered activities, such as attending school with the student or attending truancy classes, which met for six hours on two Saturdays. The district was not able to pay for participation in the program in 2008-09 when the county grant ended, but staff hoped to use stimulus funds to re-establish the program in 2009-10.

Funding

- Local funds were used to support dropout prevention/recovery programming with state compensatory education funding providing support for the alternative high school.

Lessons Learned

- Staff reported that providing flexible and self-paced alternatives for at-risk students who had failed courses (other than sitting through a year-long course again) was an important motivator, especially for seniors. The strategy of staffing credit recovery labs with certified teachers who developed relationships with students and who provided additional support was also reported to be more effective than sending students to a computer lab to work alone.

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