

DROPOUT PREVENTION/RECOVERY	
<p>DISTRICT Socorro ISD <i>Academically Acceptable</i> 2007-08</p> <p><i>Broad Prize for Urban Education</i> Finalist 2009</p> <p><i>Promising Practices District,</i> <i>Dropout Recovery Resource</i> <i>Guide</i>¹</p>	<p>PROGRAM SUMMARY</p> <p>The goal of Socorro ISD's (SISD) dropout prevention and recovery program is to support at-risk students in completing high school.</p> <p>Key strategies include personalized support for at-risk and dropout students through coordinated programming and data-driven counseling at every campus, multiple alternative academic options, and strategies to address barriers to high school completion.</p> <p>Outcomes include higher completion rates than the state average.²</p> <hr/> <p>EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>The district's overall completion rate was consistently above the state average over the last several years. In 2006-07, the most current year for which AEIS data were available, the district's completion rate (Completion Rate I without GED, which is used as a standard accountability indicator) was 94%, compared to the state average of 87%. The district's completion rate without GED for at-risk students was 92%, compared to the state average for at-risk students of 79%. Completion Rate I for other 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 Hispanic students was 94%, compared to the state average of 82%; for economically disadvantaged students, the district completion rate was 92%, compared to the state average of 81%; and for students identified for Limited English Proficient (LEP) programs, the district completion rate was 85%, 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.

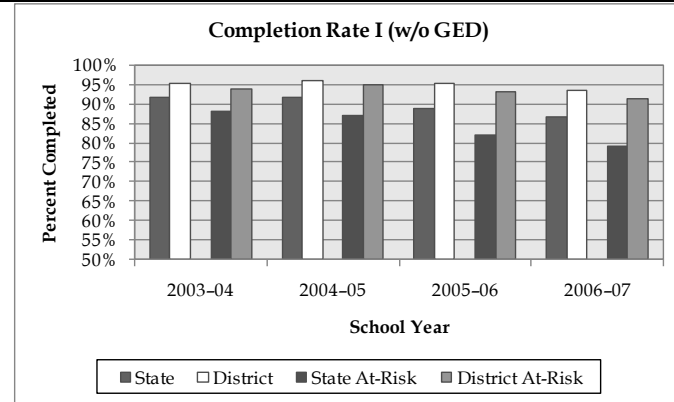
² Note: According to the 2007-08 AEIS Glossary: "Dropouts are counted according to the dropout definition in place the year they drop out. The definition changed in 2005-06. Completion rates for classes in which the national dropout definition is being phased in (i.e., classes of 2006, 2007, 2008, and 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.

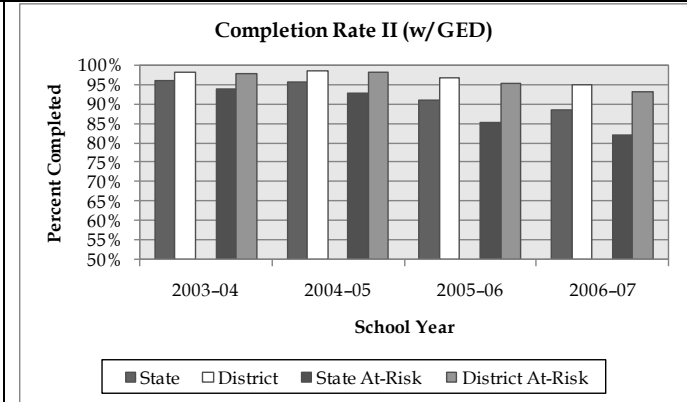
Please take one minute to answer the feedback survey (six questions).

[Best Practices Feedback Survey](#)

The overall completion rate with GED (Completion Rate II) was also higher than the state average. In 2006-07, the district's completion rate with GED was 95%, compared to the state average of 89%. The district's completion rate with GED for at-risk students was 93%, compared to the state average for at-risk students of 82%. For the other primary student groups, Completion Rate II was above the state average for the groups over the four-year period analyzed.



Source: AEIS



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CONTEXT/IMPLEMENTATION

Demographics (2007-08)

Grade Levels Served		ECE-12	District Enrollment	38,696
Ethnic Distribution			Economically Disadvantaged	28,192 72.9%
African American	694	1.8%	Limited English Proficient (LEP)	9,893 25.6%
Hispanic	36,015	93.1%	At-Risk	22,082 57.1%
White	1,646	4.3%		
Native American	137	.4%		
Asian/Pacific Islander	204	.5%		

Source: AEIS

Background

- SISD serves a student population that is 93% Hispanic, with 73% of students identified as economically disadvantaged, 26% identified for LEP programs, and 57% identified as at risk. Staff reported that the district has been growing and adding schools rapidly, requiring more uniform procedures for tracking and providing support for at-risk and dropout students.
- In 2006-07, the district expanded dropout prevention and recovery strategies to include the opening of an alternative high school, or “school-of-choice,” for at-risk and dropout students and the creation of a district position to guide dropout recovery efforts. Previously, the district was only able to offer limited alternative academic options for at-risk students and those who had already dropped out. In addition, dropout recovery efforts were limited to an end-of-year phone call campaign to track and recover students who had dropped out. Staff reported that the effectiveness of this approach was limited, as the district was often unable to locate students after time had passed.
- The district operates on a year-round schedule.

*Procedures*Coordinated Campus-Based Programs and Counseling

- The district had a long-standing Communities In Schools (CIS) program, with a coordinator at each of the district's four comprehensive high school campuses. CIS is a national stay-in-school program that is coordinated in Texas through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (for details, see <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/cis/>).⁴ CIS uses a case management model to support struggling students through campus-based CIS coordinators who are social workers. In SISD, CIS coordinators worked closely with campus counselors to provide individualized support for students who sought services themselves or who were referred by teachers, friends, principals, or other staff. This support included meeting with students, contacting parents, making home visits, referring students for district-based supplemental academic support and/or to community agencies for necessary services, advocating for students in court or discipline-related meetings, and monitoring student attendance and grades on a weekly basis. CIS staff also regularly met with campus leaders and district staff and provided monthly reporting on student progress.
- CIS coordinators also worked with counselors to develop presentations for students on health and personal/social-related topics, ran student support groups, worked with campus parent liaisons in outreach to families, and coordinated programs such as campus teen parenting programs. One key event developed by CIS staff at Americas High School in SISD was an annual Mother-Daughter program, a half-day Saturday activity for girls in Grades 6-12 and their mothers or other "women of influence" in their lives. The motivational program involved presentations by accomplished women speakers from traditional and non-traditional professional and vocational career fields.
- In 2004-05, the district began implementation of a comprehensive counseling program based on the American School Counselors Association's (ASCA) national model and the Texas guidance curriculum (for details, see http://www.schoolcounselor.org/files/Natl%20Model%20Exec%20Summary_final.pdf and http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/guidance/ProgramModel_4thEd/guidebook_2004_complete.pdf). The district and

⁴ From the state CIS Web site: "At the local level, the CIS programs are 501(c)(3) non-profit corporations administered by boards of directors that contract directly with TEA for state funding. School districts invite CIS onto their school campuses, and the CIS boards enter into written agreements with the school districts to provide services to students and families. The CIS boards employ staff to implement and administer the program in the community. Staff are hired and placed in schools served by CIS to work directly with students at risk of dropping out of school."

campus counseling departments were all structured in alignment with the ASCA model by common “domains” of student need (academic, personal/social, or career), with individual counseling staff responsible for a specific domain. Campus counselors were freed from some traditional roles and responsibilities, such as serving as testing coordinators. Staff reported that these structures allowed the department and campus counselors to be proactive, working actively with staff at the campuses and in classrooms rather than being overburdened with paperwork or other duties and waiting for staff or students to come to them.

- The district’s data-driven counseling model facilitated early identification and intervention plans and campus-level accountability for at-risk students. At the beginning of each year, the counseling department at each campus identified one district-level goal and two campus-level goals based on data review and created an intervention plan for serving and supporting students in achieving the goals. For example, one campus counseling team identified “decreasing the number of middle school students failing two or more core subjects by 40% for the 2007–08 school year” as a goal, with weekly review of progress reports and report card review as the data used for monitoring progress toward the goal. The intervention plan included strategies such as individual weekly counseling sessions for identified students, parent/teacher/administrator conferences, designated staff or team meetings, tutoring, and other programming interventions. At the end of the year, counselors presented a review of the data to campus administrators, summarizing effective strategies.
- At the beginning of each year, the district counseling department also provided each high school campus with a list of at-risk seniors who had failed a portion of the exit-level TAKS, who lacked credits, or both, and worked with the campus counselors to design specific interventions to help those students graduate. Interventions could include use of an online credit recovery system called NovaNET (for details, see <http://www.pearsonschool.com/>), parent conferences, tutoring, or night classes at the district’s alternative high school. In addition, the Summer Access to College Program was implemented in 2007–08 through a district partnership with El Paso Community College to assist any SISD senior who was unable to graduate due to performance on exit-level TAKS. Students were allowed to take up to six college credit hours at El Paso Community College (at no cost to the student), while simultaneously participating in intense tutoring provided by the district in the TAKS subject area of concern. Students retook the TAKS in July and were encouraged to continue with college courses for the second summer session and beyond.
- In addition, across the district, campuses adopted a range of approaches to provide academic support to meet the needs of at-risk students at earlier grade levels. For example, every high school established a freshman initiative to provide course recovery and Algebra I support. In addition, a full-time tutoring center at each campus staffed by teachers or college-student tutors provided support during the day and before and after school, with transportation provided.

Alternative Academic Options

- In 2006-07, with the creation of a Director of Dropout Recovery position, the district implemented an enhanced dropout identification plan that required a campus attendance committee at each high school to review attendance records and dropout and leaver lists at least every two weeks, with a structured process for contacting students and parents. The committee, which consisted of the assistant principal, counselor, registrar, attendance/truancy officer, attendance clerk, and nurse, was in charge of recovering students who dropped out through phone calls and home visits. To ensure the quality and integrity of dropout and completion rate data, Campus At-Risk Coordinators and PEIMS clerks were trained on coding and supporting documentation. Leaver code committees at each campus were responsible for checking and updating data. In addition, a district-level leaver code committee, composed of personnel from the PEIMS Department and the Dropout Recovery Director, visited each campus monthly to conduct leaver code audits, check on data integrity, and assist campuses with recovery efforts.
- A subgroup of each campus' attendance committee was also charged with identifying students who were potentially at risk of dropping out and following up to alert the campus principal and other campus staff, providing information to the student and parents about academic options, and monitoring the student's progress. The district Director of Dropout Recovery monitored campus-level identification and support efforts for these student groups.
- The district opened an alternative high school or "school of choice" (Options High School) in July 2007 with capacity to serve 150-200 at-risk and recovered dropout students. Admission was based on recommendations from counselors at district high schools and interviews with students and their families. Because the campus could only serve a limited number of students, the interview process was designed to identify students who the interview committee viewed as serious about finishing high school. The interview involved questions for students and parents that focused on the students' goals at the high school and their goals after graduation, their history of success and failure in school, and their expectations for how the high school staff could help them succeed. Admitted students were expected to complete the Recommended High School Program (RHSP). Parents were asked to agree to a set of expectations for how they would support the student.
- Admission decisions at the alternative high school were ongoing. The admissions committee held interviews every two weeks. Students who had already dropped out of school were admitted immediately. Students who were identified as at risk but who were still in school were admitted at the beginning of the next nine weeks.

- For recovered dropouts, some alternative scheduling options, such as night courses, were available for completing the regular high school curriculum. For at-risk students, scheduling was flexible but essentially reflected a traditional high school schedule.
- After admission, the campus conducted a welcoming interview with each new student. The student met with the principal, a social worker, and a counselor to discuss how to address barriers the student faced in attending school, such as the need to work, transportation, childcare needs if the student had a child or childcare responsibilities, and/or other issues related to the student's socioeconomic status.
- The campus established structured procedures for closely monitoring student attendance on a period-by-period basis. Teachers were required to immediately call parents/guardians from a phone in their classroom if a student was absent from a class. If the teacher was unable to reach the parent/guardian, the campus' attendance clerk continued to try to contact the parent/guardian. If unsuccessful, the clerk sent the case to the truancy officer who visited the student's home. After two absences, the student's parent/guardian was sent a warning letter. After three absences, the student was required to appear in court.
- The campus instructional plan was designed around four periods of traditional classroom instruction and four periods of self-paced, computer-based instruction using the A+ program for credit recovery (for details, see http://www.amered.com/sol_crb_products.php) or E2020 virtual classroom software (for details, see <http://www.education2020.com/studentneed.html>). Traditional courses were offered in the four core subject areas, languages, and electives aligned with the RHSP. Instructional strategies used in classroom instruction included small group instruction and extensive use of hands-on activities and visuals.
- In 2007-08, Options High School implemented a mentoring program through which each teacher was assigned a group of 10-12 students. Every Tuesday, students met with their mentors in small groups for 25 minutes. The campus social worker developed themes and discussion frameworks for these meetings around topics such as bullying, character education, college and career exploration, and other relevant topics. The mentors were also available for individual meetings with their assigned mentees. The program was designed to provide for each student a "caring adult" they could turn to discuss academic, social, and personal challenges. Teachers and staff reported to the mentor any issues with the student so the mentor could follow up. In addition, mentors monitored daily progress of assigned students, making daily contact to discuss any emerging issues.

Addressing Barriers

- Staff reported that the district supported any effort to remove barriers to a student's completion of high school. For example, for students with transportation or childcare needs, the district funded busing and transportation

to and from school, work, and childcare facilities. Some funding for transportation to and from work came from district Career and Technical Education (CTE) funds. Costs for childcare of the student's choice were covered for eligible students by an agreement with the YWCA. The district covered childcare costs for students who were ineligible for YWCA-funded childcare support through a TEA Life Skills Program for Student Parents Grant (for details, see <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/pep/>).

- The district Director of Dropout Recovery also oversaw the district's teen parenting program. Each campus offered this program to pregnant teens or teen parents, which included life skills and parenting education as well as job readiness and career counseling. Campus coordinators reported to the district director on a bi-weekly basis to identify participating students with excessive absences or poor academic performance. The director then communicated with campus principals and other campus staff to provide additional support for these students and monitor identified student progress.
- The district actively partnered with community organizations to provide additional services (health, mental health, financial, housing, legal, food and nutritional) to meet student needs. In particular, the district partnered with the El Paso Police Department's Youth Initiative Program to develop the Multi-Agency Referral System (MARS), a regional initiative to provide cooperative delivery of services to area students in need through their schools (for details, see http://www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/police/yip_facts.asp). Student cases were presented anonymously to MARS representatives for referral and advice at monthly meetings held at campuses throughout the district.
- The district also tried to address students' financial need to work through co-op programs, district and campus jobs, and an agreement with Workforce Solutions, the workforce development board of the Upper Rio Grande, which provided job training and workforce placement support for referred students.
- In 2008-09, the district applied for and was awarded a Dropout Recovery Pilot Program (Cycle 2) grant from TEA (for details, see <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3686>). With this grant, and an additional \$200,000 of stimulus funds, the district created additional positions (an administrative assistant, two full-time and one half-time teacher positions, and a social worker/counselor position) to offer another tier of dropout prevention/recovery support for the most at-risk students. This extra level of support was designed for students who did not adapt to the alternative academic setting at Options and who were still at risk of dropping out, or for recovered students for whom the alternative high school was not an ideal option (for example, for older students or students with family or economic responsibilities who could not or did not want to participate in more traditional high school programming).

- Beginning in July 2009, these new dropout program staff began operating a full-day credit-recovery program separate from any of the campus high schools through use of self-paced, computer-based software in two portable buildings. Funding for extra duty pay to hire district teachers on an hourly basis to provide academic support as needed for students participating in credit recovery was also included in the budget for the program. The program was also designed to provide GED preparation software for students choosing the GED route, and the district developed partnerships with El Paso Community College and Western Technical College to enroll SISD students in their GED and workforce training programs. Program staff responsibilities included providing support in registering students in programs, assistance with paperwork and job applications, and ongoing monitoring of student participation and progress in GED programs.

Lessons Learned

- Options High School staff reported that selecting the right staff for the alternative high school environment was key. Appropriate staff ideally had multiple certifications (such as in mathematics and science, Spanish and English Language Arts, or English as a Second Language and a subject area). Teachers needed to be experienced in their field and able to adequately handle multiple preparations as staff were required to teach subjects at all grade levels.
- The dropout recovery director reported that providing multiple options and alternative settings to traditional high school campuses was key to recovering and keeping students who had already dropped out of school.

CAMPUS/DISTRICT STAFF

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