



Parent Engagement in Drop-Out Prevention

A Proposed Guiding Framework



America's Promise Alliance &
Annie E. Casey Foundation
(Spring/Summer 2009)

www.americaspromise.org/parentengagement

Background

- ❑ The America's Promise Alliance (APA) is a cross-sector partnership of more than 300 corporations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and advocacy groups. Its top priority is ensuring that all young people graduate from high school ready for college, work and life.
- ❑ Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States.
- ❑ APA and the Casey Foundation have joined together to bring a more intentional family strengthening and parent engagement focus to dropout prevention

Facts about Dropping Out

- ❑ One student in America **drops out** every 26 seconds; that's **1.23 million** per year
- ❑ About half of African American and Hispanic youth fail to graduate on time
- ❑ Of those who do graduate with a high school diploma, **only 1/3 are ready for college**
- ❑ Jobs that require post-secondary education will make up more than 2/3 of new jobs

Why Do Students Drop Out?

- Life Events
- Fade Outs
- Push Outs
- Failing to Succeed
 - Attendance
 - Behavior
 - Course Failure

* For more information, see *What Your Community Can Do to End Its Dropout Crisis* by Robert Balfanz, Johns Hopkins University

Why is Parent Engagement in Dropout Prevention Important?

Students with involved parents (regardless of family income or background) are more likely to:

- ❑ Earn higher grades and test scores
- ❑ Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits
- ❑ Attend school regularly
- ❑ Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school
- ❑ Graduate and go on to postsecondary education



Keys To Success:

Start Early and Keep It Up!

- ❑ Engagement of parents in the early years (at preschool or kindergarten) builds the foundation for successful parent-school partnerships
- ❑ Waiting to engage parents in high school – at the point at which the student is dropping out – is too late
- ❑ It's even harder to engage parents if they felt alienated and patronized by educators when their children were younger
- ❑ Parent engagement is even more difficult if the parents, themselves, had unsuccessful experiences as students.
- ❑ Middle and high school teachers typically only engage with parents around disciplinary issues.

Framework for Parent Engagement

The “3A” Framework – these 3 priorities are critical to student success AND are heavily influenced by parental action/beliefs:

□ Attendance Every Day

- Ensure children go to school regularly

□ Achievement Every Year

- Monitor and help children make satisfactory progress each year

□ Attainment Over Time

- Set high expectations for children and plan for attaining their long-term goals



Attendance Every Day

Rationale:

- ❑ Children can't learn if they aren't present
- ❑ Parents – especially in the early years – are best positioned to ensure children attend school and to build the expectation around attendance

Connection to School Success:

- ❑ Chronic absence in Kindergarten is associated with lower academic performance in 1st grade among all children and, for poor children, predicts the lowest levels of educational achievement at the end of fifth grade.
- ❑ By 6th grade, missing 20% (or two months of school) is a critical warning sign of school drop-out.
- ❑ By 9th grade, missing 20% of school can be a better predictor of drop-out than 8th grade test scores.



Achievement Every Year

Rationale:

- ❑ Grade level achievement is critical to long-term success
- ❑ Parents play a critical role in helping their child to make satisfactory progress. Students especially depend upon their parents for ensuring their learning needs are met in and out of school and for monitoring their homework.

Connection to School Success:

- ❑ Reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade is critical to students being able to read to learn in all of their subjects.
- ❑ A sixth grader who fails math or English or an unsatisfactory behavior mark or poor attendance has a 75% likelihood of dropping out.
- ❑ Freshmen in Chicago public schools who earn a B average or better have an 80% chance of finishing high school with at least a 3.0 GPA



Attainment Over Time

Rationale:

- ❑ Students and their parents need to have shared beliefs and understanding about long-term success and what it takes.
- ❑ Most children depend upon their parents for guidance and encouragement.

Connection to School Success:

- ❑ Chances for success are improved when adults offer children, starting at a young age, with positive expectations and aspirations about what they can do and achieve.
- ❑ In many middle schools, students already face the challenge of tracking to vocational or college bound courses.
- ❑ High school students and their parents especially need a strong understanding of career options and what's required to pursue them (e.g., graduation & college entrance requirements)

The 3 As: Other Considerations

- The 3A Framework also provides for engagement of other stakeholders in the dropout prevention work (e.g., schools, communities)
 - The combined efforts of all stakeholders can make the difference
- Paying attention to the 3As is particularly important at points of transitions in a student's academic career (e.g., movement from elementary to middle, and middle to high school)
 - Differentiated strategies by age of children are needed