

APPENDIX V - 24

Dropout Prevention

The Dropout Prevention department continued to provide support to students and families who were most in jeopardy of dropping out. Research indicates that dropping out is highly correlated with chronic absenteeism, high mobility, failing grades, insufficient credit and student disengagement.

Dropout Prevention Specialists

During SY 2020-21, Dropout Prevention Specialists were assigned by region, following the organizational format of schools: five regions, each with 14-17 schools. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a substantial portion of this work was done virtually. However, if the student did not respond using a virtual approach, specialists did attempt home visits.

During this time, the elementary school level required the most attention from specialists. All schools were encouraged to request services from dropout prevention specialists using the Student Equity and Intervention Request for Services online referral process.

Specialists supported students through one-to-one conferences, attendance monitoring, referrals to other District departments and district services as needed, identification and monitoring through the MTSS process, and home visits. They also provided alternative options for students to complete school and connect students with community resources, as necessary.

During the school closures due to COVID-19, dropout specialists delivered laptops/Chrome Books to students and talked to many parents/guardians regarding pushing their student to stay academically focused until students could return to

Steps to Success

In SY 2020-21, middle and high schools continued quarterly, site-based Steps to Success practices. Principals, counselors, and teachers visited the homes of their students in-person. They spoke with students who may have dropped out of school, were failing classes, demonstrating poor attendance, or were credit deficient. Dropout Prevention assisted by creating the effective procedures, guiding schools during implementation, and joining visits to provide real-time professional learning.

Step By Step

In SY2020-21, the District implemented Step By Step - a program for 8th grade students to help facilitate the transition from middle to high school. This initiative gives students tools to work with should they need assistance academically and explains many nuances of high school. For SY 20-21, the highly interactive, audience driven presentation was converted to a virtual presentation. By using ZOOM, we were able to convey this important message to 8th grades across the district.

Home Visits

Despite COVID-19, and school closures, the Dropout Prevention Specialists continued to visit student homes for those who were experiencing habitual absenteeism or were in jeopardy of dropping out. In SY2020-21, eight dropout specialists made over 500 in-person daytime and evening home visits, both scheduled and spontaneous. For students of legal age, the specialist directed the conversation toward the student. For students under the legal age, the specialists spoke with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and encouraged them to include the student in the conversation and resolution.