

Student Support Strategies

Dropout Prevention

1. Dropout Prevention Specialists

During school year 2023-2024, Dropout Prevention Specialists were assigned by region, following the organizational format of schools: five regions, each with 14-17 schools. Each Region had at least one Dropout Specialist.

Specialists monitored student attendance by looking at students who did not return for SY 23-24, using Arizona Department of Education (ADE) attendance data (students who either had numerous unexcused absences or had dropped out of school), and using the Multi-Tiered Student Service (MTSS) process. While Specialists were housed at the high schools, services were provided to all grade levels using an Online Request for Service form.

Dropout Specialists supported students through one-to-one conferences, attendance monitoring, home visits, student advocacy, collaboration/referrals with other district departments and services as needed. Specialists provided alternative options for students to complete school. They also connected students to community resources as necessary.

2. Home Visits

In SY2023-24, Dropout Prevention Specialists visited the homes of ~~students~~ demonstrating habitual absenteeism, who had dropped out of school, and students who were in jeopardy of being dropped from school in accordance with ADE laws and regulations. Specialists made over 500 daytime and evening home visits both scheduled and spontaneous. By reaching out to students and their families in a comfortable environment, the District can build a rapport with the family and act as a liaison between the family and the school.

3. Site-Based Steps to Success

Since the district-wide Steps-to-Success achieved positive outcomes, Dropout Prevention offered a site-based version to high and middle schools. Sites identified a target area (students who may have dropped out of school, be failing classes, demonstrate poor attendance or be credit deficient) and selected the students who met the criteria. Dropout Specialists compiled educational options for each student, accompanied the site representatives on the home visits and provided follow-up services as needed.

4. Step By Step

Step by Step is a program for 8th-grade students to help facilitate the transition from middle to high school. The information provided gives students tools to work with should they need assistance academically or emotionally and explains the many nuances of high school. Step By Step also affords the student the opportunity to meet the Dropout Specialist assigned to the high school they will attend.

5. Empowerment Student Mentors

In school year 2023-24, the Summer Empowerment Program was crafted to help support students with behavioral manifestations. This program provided a summer school experience addressing goal setting, positive behaviors, and academic support. During this time, the Dropout Prevention Specialists met with participating students, whom they will continue to mentor throughout the 2024-25 school year.

6. Shelter Services

Dropout Prevention Specialists are working in conjunction with a Pima County Homeless Shelter to ensure students have the opportunity to attend school. Staff held “Meet and Greets” as a way to build a rapport with the families and get the students enrolled in school.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

In SY 2023-24, the District required all schools to implement the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process and to develop intervention plans for students that required tier 2 or tier 3 interventions. To guarantee students received interventions, the District funded 38 full-time MTSS Facilitator positions at high-needs schools. Thirty-four (34) sites that were not designated as “high need” used Title 1 or ESSER monies to hire a full-time MTSS Facilitator. Schools without a full-time MTSS Facilitator designated an MTSS Lead to support the MTSS process at their site.

MTSS Facilitators and MTSS Leads provided site training regarding the MTSS process, Synergy MTSS platform, and best practices in implementing interventions. They also held MTSS meetings four times a month with stakeholders to discuss students with MTSS Student Support Plans and share data to determine the next appropriate steps for each student. Additionally, MTSS Facilitators and MTSS Leads documented all MTSS Student Support Plans and progress monitoring data in the Synergy MTSS platform.

The Academic Interventions Department continued to monitor the MTSS systematic practices and provide support to the MTSS Facilitators and MTSS Leads to ensure that the MTSS process was implemented with fidelity throughout the district. Professional learning was provided during the monthly CIPDA sessions at Howenstine, which focused on data literacy and strengthening intervention systems.

In the 2023-24 school year, Academic Interventions worked with District leadership to develop the MTSS Identification Criteria, which established baseline data to identify students who required tier 2 and tier 3 interventions in a timely manner. To further develop the effectiveness of the MTSS Identification Criteria in the 2024-25 school year, Academic Interventions worked with the Assessment and Evaluation Department to utilize the PowerBI platform, to give MTSS Facilitators and MTSS Leads easy access to the data outlined in the MTSS Identification Criteria.

In addition, the Academic Interventions worked with the Language Acquisition Department to create MTSS Identification Criteria to identify English Learners needing support outside of the ELD curriculum. During the 2023-24SY, the Academic Interventions continued to implement the MTSS Needs Assessment Action Plan, making progress on all goals.