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March 2008; Revised January 2009 to include a users guide for the database

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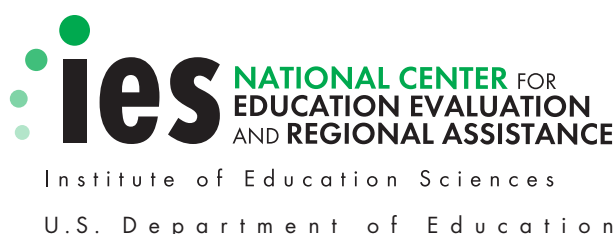**Education Development Center, Inc.**
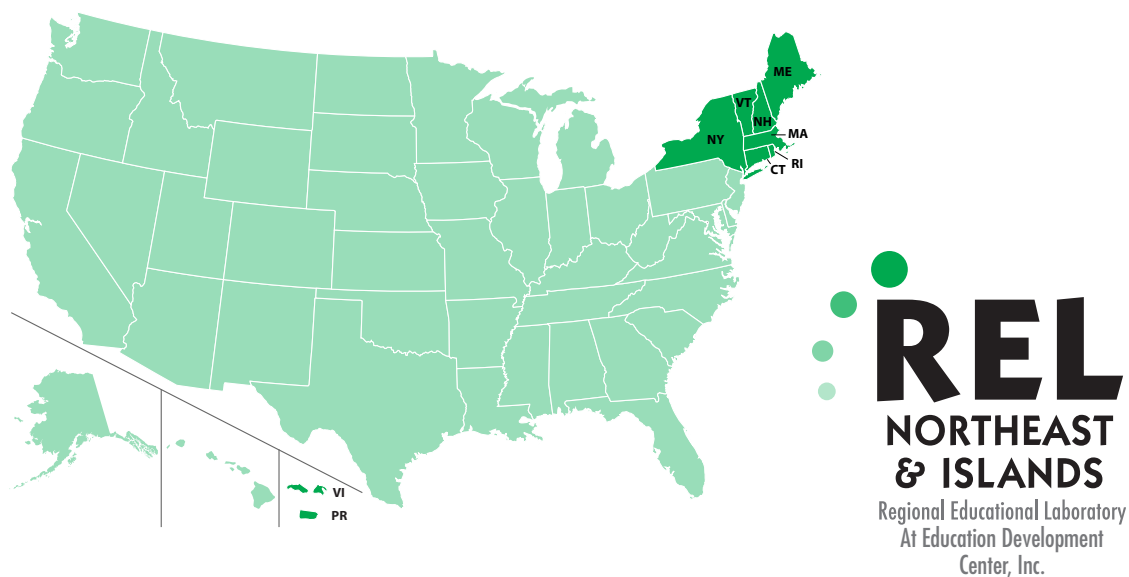
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Issues & Answers is an ongoing series of reports from short-term Fast Response Projects conducted by the regional educational laboratories on current education issues of importance at local, state, and regional levels. Fast Response Project topics change to reflect new issues, as identified through lab outreach and requests for assistance from policymakers and educators at state and local levels and from communities, businesses, parents, families, and youth. All Issues & Answers reports meet Institute of Education Sciences standards for scientifically valid research.

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This report is available on the regional educational laboratory web site at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs.

Summary

Piloting a searchable database of dropout prevention programs in nine low-income urban school districts in the Northeast and Islands Region

Despite evidence that some dropout prevention programs have positive effects, whether districts in the region are using such evidence-based programs has not been documented. This report details a pilot project to generate and share knowledge by building a searchable database of dropout programs and policies.

To generate and share knowledge on dropout programs and policies, this report details a project to create a searchable database with information on target audiences, prevention strategies, age ranges, in-school and out-of-school staff involvement, and whether programs were reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse. Based on the dropout prevention literature, the database identifies nine service goals (such as increase school attachment and decrease truancy) and 17 core strategies (such as community learning curricula and tutoring/extra classes) and maps these across schools, districts, and programs and policies.[1]

Despite evidence that some dropout prevention programs have positive effects, whether districts in the region are using such evidence-based programs has not been documented. The report records dropout prevention programs and policies in nine mid-size cities with the Northeast and Islands Region's highest dropout rates, largest minority student populations, and most children living below the poverty line. Because data collection was limited to nine pilot sites, the main purpose of the study is to demonstrate the types of questions that the database can

answer, especially as more districts are added and tracked over time.

Each of the nine districts is currently implementing at least nine dropout prevention programs and policies. All programs and policies in the database explicitly target dropout prevention, dropout reduction, or school completion or target subpopulations of students that the dropout prevention literature demonstrates to be at high risk of dropping out (for example, pregnant teens, students who are old for their grade, and students with emotional or behavioral challenges).

Testing the searchable database with data from the pilot districts focused on two sets of data. The first is the characteristics of programs and policies implemented across districts:

- The core strategies most frequently used are tutoring/extra classes (38 records), social and emotional learning curricula (37 records), and community collaboration (34 records).

- Each of the nine service goals is targeted by at least 14 programs or policies across the pilot districts. The goals most commonly targeted are to improve academic performance and to increase school attachment.

- Seven programs and policies target middle school youth only (grades 6–8), 51 target high school youth only (grades 9–12), 46 target both middle school and high school youth, and 20 are not grade specific.

- About 30 percent of the programs target students with academic needs, about 18 percent target students who are chronically absent or truant, and about 15 percent target students with behavioral challenges.

The second set of data concerns the characteristics of individual districts and sets of districts:

- Each pilot district uses 13 or more core strategies, with 11 core strategies of the 17 used by all nine districts.

- In six pilot districts the greatest number of programs and policies targets improving academic performance. The other three districts have more programs and policies targeting increasing school attachment and decreasing truancy and providing support during transitions.

- In four pilot districts the greatest number of programs and policies targets subsets of students designated as at-risk because they are members of particular segments of the school population, such as pregnant teens and English language learners. In two districts the greatest number of programs and policies targets individuals who have exhibited behaviors, such as failing grades, that put them at high risk of dropping out.

When information from more districts is available, the database will be able to provide data on other questions as well. The report includes sample shells for tables on those data.

The database also identifies whether a program or policy has been reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse. Two of the programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse are being implemented in the pilot districts, Talent Search (five districts) and Career Academies (eight). None of the districts is using the other 10 programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse, and none is using a What Works Clearinghouse–reviewed program that has mixed effects or no discernable effects.

Several programs and policies being implemented by multiple districts have not been reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse. Review of such programs and policies will be appropriate only if they meet eligibility criteria, which require substantial evaluation evidence. To date, such evidence is limited on most programs being used. Reflecting the lack of rigorous evaluation is that most informants could provide only anecdotal evidence of local success (not included in the database).

The report makes three recommendations for better documenting progress toward evidence-based practices for keeping students in school:

- Moving beyond nine sites in the pilot phase with an effort across regional educational laboratories to expand the database to include dropout prevention strategies in districts across the country.

- Developing and implementing a sampling plan to catalog dropout prevention programs and policies in Puerto Rico, where large proportions of students are at high risk of dropping out.

- Expanding the database in the initial pilot sites to monitor changes in dropout prevention programs and policies and adoption of evidence-based practices—and to include a greater diversity of districts within the region, especially larger cities where many students are at risk of dropping out.

March 2008; Revised January 2009 to include a users guide for the database

Note

1. Users can access the database online at http://www.relnei.org/research.educational.dropoutdb.php. An account name and password from REL Northeast and Islands are needed to log in to the database. To receive an account name and password, contact dropoutprevention@edc.org.

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Despite evidence that some dropout prevention programs have positive effects, whether districts in the region are using such evidence-based programs has not been documented. This report details a pilot project to generate and share knowledge by building a searchable database of dropout programs and policies.

WHY THIS STUDY?

Dropping out of school before graduation can hurt personal income, employment opportunities, literacy, and health throughout a lifetime, and it can make exposure to and involvement in crime more likely. According to a 2004 U.S. Census report, high school dropouts were 3.5 times more likely than graduates to be arrested in their lifetime and earned $9,245 a year less on average (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). Individuals who have dropped out of school account for nearly half the heads of household on welfare and for nearly half the prison population (Schwartz, 1995).

Students drop out of school for a variety of reasons. In a recent study by Civic Enterprises, 47 percent of high school dropouts cited a lack of connection to school as the reason for their dropping out (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006). Also linked to dropping out are poor academic performance, low school attendance, mobility, parenthood, experience with the juvenile justice system, low parental involvement, the need to care for a family member, emotional and behavioral challenges, poor learning conditions, and limited instructional support (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Neils & Balfanz, 2006). Other studies find that dropout is often a long-term, cumulative process, with risk factors present as early as 6th grade predicting whether a student completes school (Balfanz & Herzog, 2006). Nationwide, students living in families with incomes in the bottom 20 percent were about four times more likely to drop out of high school between 2003 and 2004 than peers from families with incomes in the top 20 percent (Laird, DeBell, & Chapman, 2006).

Several states in the Northeast and Islands Region have among the highest average freshman graduation rates. But New York consistently ranks among the lowest, and only 60.9 percent of freshmen who started high school in fall 1999 are estimated to have graduated on time (Seastrom, Hoffman, Chapman, & Stillwell, 2005).

Even in Connecticut, which has relatively high and improving graduation rates, getting a diploma remains challenging in districts that serve largely low-income minority families of color (State of Connecticut Commission on Children, 2006). And in districts such as Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven, where large proportions of students

are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, the cumulative four-year dropout rates are 14–22 percent, compared with the state average of 7 percent (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2007b). In Massachusetts the annual dropout rate in 2005/06 for low-income students was 5.5 percent, compared with 2.6 percent for non-low-income students (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2007b). By one estimate, African American students are up to 10 times more likely than White students to attend a high school with high dropout and low graduation rates (Balfanz & Legters, 2004). In many districts graduation rates are lowest among Hispanic students.

Even among students who complete high school, minority students are often less likely than White students to graduate on time or to receive diplomas indicating successful completion of a rigorous course of study (Council of the City of New York, 2005). In Massachusetts the annual dropout rate is 6.8 percent for African American students and 7.9 percent for Hispanic students, compared with 2.3 percent for White students (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2007b). Gender disparities in education are also more pronounced among minority youth. An analysis of 2003 graduation data finds that although 59 percent of African American females earned a diploma, only 48 percent of males did so. Among Hispanic students, 58 percent of females graduated but just 49 percent of males did so. Among White students, however, 79 percent of females and 74 percent of males earned a diploma (Greene & Winters, 2006).

Literature on dropout prevention shows that a number of strategies may help stop youth from dropping out (Dynarski & Gleason, 2002; Hammond, Shrink, & Drew, 2007). The What Works Clearinghouse is conducting a rigorous review of how effectively dropout prevention programs help students stay in school, progress in school, and complete school (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007a–h).

> **Based on the dropout prevention literature, the database identifies nine service goals and 17 core strategies and maps these across schools, districts, and programs and policies**

Dropout prevention can begin in the early grades, with literacy programs, for example. But students ages 15–17 are at greatest risk of dropping out, so this report follows the lead of the What Works Clearinghouse in focusing on middle school, junior high school, and high school, and on community-based interventions to help students stay in school and complete school. Among the programs that the What Works Clearinghouse has reviewed as having positive or potentially positive effects are those that use close monitoring strategies, increase partnerships with families, establish career-focused academies in schools, and offer additional support for academic and behavioral success and college entry. The dropout prevention programs for which the What Works Clearinghouse has evaluated evidence use one or more specific strategies. Thus, the available evidence relates to the effectiveness of specific bundles of strategies that constitute programs and not, strictly speaking, to the individual strategies or to other programs incorporating different combinations of strategies. Dropout prevention initiatives may target individual students at high risk, defined groups of students, or whole schools and districts.

Despite evidence that some programs can help students stay in school and progress, whether districts in the Northeast and Islands Region are using these evidence-based programs has not been documented. To generate and share knowledge on dropout programs and policies, this report details a project to create a searchable database with information on target audiences, prevention strategies, age ranges, in-school and out-of-school staff involvement, and whether programs were reviewed by What Works Clearinghouse. Based on the dropout prevention literature, the database identifies nine service goals and 17 core strategies and maps these across schools, districts, and programs and policies. The project was in five parts:

- Prepare an interactive, searchable database to catalog information on dropout prevention policies and programs.

- Develop and field test a protocol for systematically collecting information about dropout prevention programs and policies in nine mid-size cities with the Northeast and Islands Region's highest dropout rates, largest minority student populations, and most children living below the poverty line. Because data collection was limited to nine pilot sites, the main purpose is to demonstrate the types of questions that the database can answer, especially as more districts are added and tracked over time.

- Pilot potential uses of the database for displaying information on programs and policies for dropout prevention.

- Document whether these cities have implemented evidence-based programs and policies consistent with What Works Clearinghouse findings.

- Make recommendations for documenting progress toward evidence-based practices in the selected cities and for expanding this effort to additional districts (for example, large cities, urban fringe, small towns, and rural areas).

Each of the nine districts is currently implementing at least nine dropout prevention programs and policies. Programs and policies were entered as a record when identified by key informants as a distinct dropout prevention initiative in their district, usually with a specific name or title to identify them. Programs are typically funded by discrete grants or budget allocations, target a specific subgroup of students, and go beyond the standard student experience. Policies are typically districtwide initiatives that aim to reduce dropouts, often targeting a wider and more universal group of students and not as dependent on discrete funding. Both programs (such as Talent Search) and policies (such as one that allows freshmen who do not have enough credits to continue into 10th grade while taking accelerated freshman credits) were entered into the database.

All programs and policies in the database explicitly target dropout prevention, dropout reduction, or school completion or target subpopulations of students that the dropout prevention literature demonstrates to be at higher risk of dropping out (for example, pregnant teens, students who are old for their grade, and students with emotional or behavioral challenges). Staff also identified programs or policies through a search of publicly available information.

Illustrative analyses using the pilot data present two types of tabulations. The first examines the characteristics of programs and policies implemented across the nine pilot districts:

- The core strategies most frequently used are tutoring/extra classes (38 records), social and emotional learning curricula (37 records), and community collaboration (34 records).

- Each of the nine service goals (improve academic progress and address behavioral challenges, for example) is targeted by at least 14 programs or policies across the pilot districts. The goals most commonly targeted are to improve academic performance and to increase school attachment.

- Seven programs and policies target middle school youth only (grades 6–8), 51 target high school youth only (grades 9–12), 46 target both middle school and high school youth, and 20 are not grade specific.

- About 30 percent of the programs target students with academic needs, about 18 percent target students who are chronically absent or truant, and about 15 percent target students with behavioral challenges.

> **Illustrative analyses using the pilot data present two types of tabulations: characteristics of programs and policies implemented across pilot districts and characteristics of individual districts or groups of districts**

The second set of illustrative tabulations examines the characteristics of individual districts or groups of districts with a common characteristic:

- Each pilot district uses 13 or more core strategies, with 11 core strategies of the 17 used by all nine districts.

- In six pilot districts the greatest number of programs and policies targets improving academic performance. The other three districts have more programs and policies targeting increasing school attachment, decreasing truancy, and providing support during transitions.

- In four pilot districts the greatest number of programs and policies targets subsets of students designated as at risk because they are members of particular segments of the school population, such as pregnant teens and English language learners. In two districts the greatest number of programs and policies targets individuals who have exhibited behaviors, such as failing grades, that put them at high risk of dropping out.

As of June 2007 two of the programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse are being implemented in the pilot districts, Talent Search (in five districts) and Career Academies (in eight). None of the districts is using the other 10 programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse, and none is using a What Works Clearinghouse–reviewed program that has mixed effects or no discernable effects. Several programs and policies being implemented by multiple districts have not been reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse. Review will be appropriate only if they meet eligibility criteria, which require substantial evaluation evidence. To date, such evidence is limited on most programs being used.

> **The project created a searchable database with information on target audiences, prevention strategies, age ranges, in-school and out-of-school staff involvement, and whether programs were reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse**

The report makes three recommendations for better documenting progress toward evidence-based practices for keeping students in school:

- Initiating an effort across regional educational laboratories to expand the database to include dropout prevention strategies in districts across the country.

- Developing and implementing a sampling plan to catalog dropout prevention programs and policies in Puerto Rico, where large proportions of students are at high risk of dropping out.

- Expanding the database to monitor changes in dropout prevention programs and policies and adoption of evidence-based practices in the initial pilot sites—and to include a greater diversity of districts within the region, especially larger cities where many students are at risk of dropping out.

PRODUCING THE SEARCHABLE DATABASE

To generate and share knowledge on dropout programs and policies, the project created a searchable database with information on target audiences, prevention strategies, age ranges, in-school and out-of-school staff involvement, and whether programs were reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse. The purpose of the database is to increase communication and collaboration across states and districts on strategies used and lessons learned. For this report, the database includes data for nine pilot districts. The hope is that over the long term the database will become a cumulative inventory of dropout prevention programs and policies in the Northeast and Islands Region and perhaps nationwide. Information can be readily updated, new districts can be added, and programs that are no longer being implemented can be stored, along with information about their active dates.

Appendix A provides a user guide for accessing and searching the Dropout Prevention Database. The searchable database is divided into four types of pages, each linked to the others:

- Program and policy details, which can be used to find a range of information about a specific dropout prevention program or policy.

- District details, which can be used to view information about each district, including the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, the ethnic composition of the student body, and the most recent dropout rates.

- School details, which capture location, school type, and program information for each school in the database.

- Prevention programs list, which is a sortable list that includes the name of each program or policy in the database and the corresponding districts. Users can sort by program name or district, and a hyperlink will take them to the corresponding program or policy page.

School and district pages link to programs and policies implemented there. Information on programs and policies includes identifying them using a standardized list of prevention strategies and service goals. Dropout prevention strategies are in table 1. Nine service goals to address decreasing dropout were identified:

- Improve academic performance.

- Address behavioral challenges.

- Provide career planning and preparation.

- Promote college planning and linkages.

- Provide mental health support.

- Decrease truancy.

- Address school safety and environment.

- Increase school attachment.

- Provide support during transitions.

PREPARING THE DATABASE IN PILOT DISTRICTS

The project collected data using many strategies, including a review of publicly available information and telephone interviews with key informants in districts, schools, and programs. That information was used iteratively to identify categories pertinent to cataloging dropout prevention programs. Staff then used the searchable database to compile information from a pilot sample of mid-size cities, refining the categories as additional data were gathered. Information was then coded and entered into the database.

The project sought districts for which staff would be able to collect comprehensive information on programs and policies implemented within the whole district, rather than just in individual schools, during the project period. Thus, the largest districts in the region (Boston, Buffalo, New York, and San Juan) were excluded for the initial field test. A list of mid-size cities in each state was compiled, with *mid-size city* defined by the Census Bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce as a "central city of a metro area, with the city having a population under 250,000."

Statistics on each city's non-White student population (Hispanic/Latino for ethnicity and African American, not Hispanic or Latino, for race), children living below the poverty line, and dropout rates were reviewed. The nine selected sites are mid-size urban districts with the highest percentage of non-White students, students living below the poverty line, and cumulative four-year dropout rates. Methods of calculation for the cumulative four-year dropout rates and

> **The nine selected sites are mid-size urban districts with the highest percentage of non-White students, students living below the poverty line, and cumulative four-year dropout rates**

TABLE 1
Core dropout prevention strategies

Core strategy	What the strategy does
Accelerated credit accumulation	Provides students with opportunities to fulfill credits in an expedited way so that they can catch up with their same-age peers.
Advocating for student needs	Encourages program staff to communicate with school officials or key personnel about students' needs and ways to address them.
Career education and workforce readiness	Introduces and exposes students to different types of careers and provides skills for entering the workforce.
Case management/ service coordination	Provides students or families who require multiple services with coordinated care throughout service delivery.
Community collaboration	Works with various community agencies and individuals to increase school-community collaboration and to link students to services.
Engaging and supporting families	Involves parents, guardians, and other family members in program activities and provides support to families to help them address issues that may facilitate dropout.
Individualized or culturally/ linguistically relevant instruction	Customizes instruction to match students' needs and abilities and recognizes and incorporates the cultural and linguistic diversity of students.
Instructional technologies	Uses innovative new technologies, such as teacher-supported computer-based learning, to increase student motivation.
Mentoring	Matches students with adult mentors in an effort to establish a close and supportive one-on-one relationship.
Monitoring attendance	Uses tools or strategies to help schools more closely monitor whether or not a student is in school and to contact parents to let them know that their child is absent.
Out-of-school enrichment	Provides students with after-school, Saturday, and summer enrichment programs.
Professional development	Provides opportunities for teaching staff to gain skills they can use inside and outside the classroom to enrich their experiences and those of their students.
Providing social and emotional support during transitions	Focuses on providing support to students who are in transition periods—going from middle to high school, pregnancy, returning from incarceration, newly immigrated, and parenthood; includes providing support to students with mental health needs.
Social and emotional learning curricula	Uses curricula in classrooms to help students develop social and emotional learning skills (for example, conflict resolution) to deal with circumstances that may place them at risk of dropping out.
Systemic/policy renewal	Focuses on creating a formal process to create or update coordinated district-level policies for dropout prevention to address the most current issues and risks.
Transforming the school environment	Strives to create an overall school environment that is caring, safe, and emotionally supportive and in which students feel safe and a sense of respect and self-worth; may include smaller communities.
Tutoring/extra classes	Provides students with extra academic support for subjects in which they are failing or not excelling.

Source: Authors' review of the literature as described in appendix B.

the annual rates may, however, vary across states. Annual dropout rates reflect the percentage of students enrolled in a school year (often including the previous summer) who did not return by the following October and who had not transferred to a different school. The four-year cumulative rate reflects the percentage of students in a cohort who were enrolled in 9th grade but did not graduate four years later. Each site had a non-White population of at least 23 percent, at least 21 percent of children living below the poverty line, and four-year dropout rates of at least 15 percent (see box 1 and appendix B for details on methodology).

Collecting data for the database

A protocol was developed for compiling information about dropout prevention programs and policies from many sources: publicly available documents on district and school initiatives, information on evidence-based programs identified by the What Works Clearinghouse and other dropout prevention resources, and interviews with key informants. Supporting materials, such as introductory letters to school superintendents, interview guides, and templates for the initial recording of information were developed (see appendixes C and D). The protocol was then field tested in each of the nine selected districts and refined as needed.

If asked by key informants to define *dropout,* project staff referred to the definition of "event dropout rate" (often referred to as an "annual dropout rate") as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics: "students who left school between the beginning of one school year and the beginning of the next without earning a high school diploma or its equivalent (for example, a GED)." The large majority of informants did not ask for a definition of

Key informants interviewed

Level	Position	Number
District	Superintendents	3
	School board chairs	1
	Dropout coordinators or specialists	3
	Assistant superintendents	2
	Directors/coordinators of pupil services	7
	Department supervisors	4
School	Principals	4
	Assistant principals	1
	Counselors	2
Program	Program directors	19
	Program coordinators	5
	Advisors	6

dropout. All project data, including written notes, audio cassettes, and supplemental materials, were archived.

Across the nine districts 58 representatives participated in project interviews. These informants held key positions in districts, schools, and programs (see table). An average of six key informants participated for each district, and at least four individuals participated in all but one district.

Taken together, the selected school districts serve more than 200,000 students in more than 400 schools. Annual dropout rates range from about 4 percent to 10 percent, and cumulative four-year dropout rates range from 15 percent to 34 percent. Three states (Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont) and the Virgin Islands did not have mid-size cities that met study criteria (high dropout rates and minority student populations and many children living under the poverty line). Their programs and policies can be cataloged in later years using the protocol and searchable database.

PILOTING THE DATABASE WITH DATA FROM THE NINE DISTRICTS

This section shows how the searchable database can be used. Because data collection was limited to nine pilot sites, the main purpose is to demonstrate the types of questions that the database can

answer, especially as more districts are added and tracked over time.

The database contains 124 records of dropout prevention policies and programs. One record, for example, describes a new policy in Lowell that allows 9th grade repeaters ("provisional sophomores") to move with their classmates into the building for grades 10–12, so that they can continue to interact with same-age peers but also take make-up classes to earn the credits they need. Another record describes the program Gear Up, which is used by many districts, including Lowell, New Bedford, New Haven, Providence, and Syracuse. The program targets 7th and 8th graders and promotes early college planning and linkages through workshops and field trips.

Each of the nine districts is currently implementing nine or more dropout prevention programs and policies. All programs and policies in the

database explicitly state dropout prevention, dropout reduction, or school completion as a goal or target subpopulations of students that dropout prevention literature demonstrates to be at higher risk of dropping out (for example, pregnant teens, students who are old for their grade, and students with emotional or behavioral challenges) (Neils & Balfanz, 2006; Rumberger, 2001; Osher, Morrison, & Bailey, 2003).

Testing the searchable database with data from the pilot districts focused on answering two sets of questions. The first set was about the characteristics of programs and policies implemented across districts. What core strategies are being used? Do they target all students (a universal intervention-level approach), subgroups at higher risk (selected approach), or individuals with characteristics that put them at higher risk (indicated approach)? What are the stated goals of different efforts? What subsets of student populations are targeted?

The second set concerned characteristics of individual districts and subsets of districts. Do districts differ in the core strategies most commonly used, or in the service goals most commonly targeted? Does program selection vary by such district characteristics as the predominant race or ethnicity of students? Does selection vary by the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch?

The database might also be used to address other questions, especially as more districts are added and tracked over time. How many students are reached by programs at different intervention levels? How do the types of programs implemented by a district change over time? Do program and policy characteristics (for example, the intervention level) differ by the type of district (for example, whether districts are in large, mid-size, or small cities or in urban, suburban, or rural areas).

TABLE 2

Core dropout prevention strategies of programs and policies in the nine pilot districts

Core strategy	Programs in database using the strategy	
	Number	Percent
Tutoring/extra classes	38	31
Social and emotional learning curricula	37	30
Community collaboration	34	27
Engaging and supporting families	29	23
Individualized or culturally/linguistically relevant instruction	28	23
Transforming the school environment	28	23
Providing social and emotional support during transitions	26	21
Career education and workforce readiness	26	21
Case management/service coordination	25	20
Out-of-school enhancement	22	18
Accelerated credit accumulation	20	16
Monitoring attendance	18	15
Professional development	16	13
Mentoring	15	12
Advocating for student needs	13	10
Instructional technologies	11	9
Systemic/policy renewal	6	5

Note: Each program can apply more than one strategy.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data described in appendix B.

How the database can answer questions about programs and policies across districts

The database can be used to search for the number of programs across districts that meet a criterion. Consider, for example, the results of a search of programs and policies by core strategy (table 2). The core strategies most frequently used are tutoring/extra classes (38 records), social and emotional learning curricula (37 records), and community collaboration (34 records). Each strategy is cited by six or more programs and policies. Because a single program or policy may use multiple strategies, all strategies applying to a program are counted. Providence's Ninth Grade Academy of Science, for example, which provides a structured environment for youth at risk of dropping out, uses four core strategies: accelerated credit accumulation, community collaboration, out-of-school enhancement, and social and emotional learning curricula.

Each of the nine service goals is targeted by at least 14 programs or policies across the pilot districts (table 3). The goals most commonly targeted are to improve academic performance and to increase school attachment. Again, programs or policies may have more than one service goal, all with the outcome of decreasing dropout rates. The Transitions program at Rochester's Young Mothers and Interim Health Academy, for example, seeks to provide support during transitions and to provide mental health support.

A search by intervention level yields 30 programs or policies using a universal intervention approach, 51 using a selected approach, and 43 using an indicated approach across the pilot districts.

The database can be used to find out what grades the dropout programs and policies target. In the nine pilot districts 7 programs and policies target middle school youth only (grades 6–8), 51 target high school youth only (grades 9–12), 46 target both middle school and high school youth, and 20 are not grade specific. The Southwest Mentoring Initiative for Learning, Education, and Services mentoring program in New Bedford, for example, targets middle school students. But as youth move into high school, they and their mentors may stay in the mentoring program, so this program is coded as targeting grades 7–12.

Several programs and policies in the pilot districts target students as they transition into grade 9 or during grade 9, when many students drop out or fall behind in accumulating credits—as one interviewee notes, "if students make it to grade 10, they are more likely to make it to graduation" (personal

TABLE 3

Service goals of programs and policies in the nine pilot districts

Service goal	Programs in database with this service goal	
	Number	Percent
Improve academic performance	57	46
Increase school attachment	38	31
Decrease truancy	36	29
Provide support during transitions	34	27
Promote college planning and linkages	27	22
Provide career planning and preparation	25	20
Address behavioral challenges	23	19
Provide mental health support	17	14
Address school safety and environment	14	11

Note: Each program can apply more than one service goal.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data described in appendix B.

TABLE 4
Core strategies used by programs targeting 9th graders

Core strategy	Programs using core strategy	
	Number	Percent
Social and emotional learning curricula	27	22
Community collaboration	25	20
Engaging and supporting families	25	20
Tutoring/extra classes	24	19
Transforming the school environment	22	18
Providing social and emotional support during transitions	20	16
Career education and workforce readiness	18	15
Case management/service coordination	18	15
Out-of-school enhancement	17	14
Individualized or culturally/linguistically relevant instruction	16	13
Monitoring attendance	14	11
Professional development	14	11
Mentoring	12	10
Advocating for student needs	10	8
Accelerated credit accumulation	8	6
Systemic/policy renewal	6	4
Instructional technologies	5	4

Source: Authors' analysis based on data described in appendix B.

communication with key informant, 2007). The database can show what the pilot districts are doing to keep students in school during this transition (table 4). To do this, users can search the database to find programs or policies using two criteria: grade level and core strategy. Lowell's Freshman Academy, which was opened in fall 2005, has 9th graders attend school in a separate building from upperclassmen and divides them into small clusters taught by a team of teachers. This program uses as core strategies individualized or culturally/linguistically relevant instruction, social and emotional transition support, and systemic/policy renewal.

The searchable database can also be used to better understand what core strategies are being implemented with other subsets of the student population. Across the pilot districts, for example, about 30 percent of the programs target students with academic needs, 18 percent target students who are chronically absent or truant, and 15 percent target students with behavioral challenges (table not shown). Many programs and policies also have eligibility criteria or target students with characteristics that cut across specific (but often related) population subgroups. For example, two-thirds of the students participating in Talent Search must be from low-income families and must be the first generation in their family who would attend college. A sample shell shows how the database can be used with data from a greater number of districts to address how core strategies vary across programs and policies targeting different student populations (table 5).

How the database can answer questions about districts and subsets of districts

The database can be used to categorize and summarize records for individual districts or subsets of districts. These queries will become more valuable as more districts are added to the database and as changes are tracked over time.

TABLE 5

Sample table shell for displaying data to address how core strategies vary across programs and policies targeting specific populations

Core strategy	Academic needs	Behavioral challenges	Learning disabilities	Mental health needs	Chronically truant/absent
Accelerated credit accumulation					
Advocating for student needs					
Career education and workforce readiness					
Case management/ service coordination					
Community collaboration					

Note: Users can choose what core strategies or student populations to include in their query. This table gives one example of how information can be displayed.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data described in appendix B.

The database can identify which core strategies are being used in specific districts. Each pilot district uses 13 or more core strategies, with 11 core strategies of the 17 used by all nine districts. In one district there are no records that indicate the core strategy of social and emotional support during transitions. Two districts do not have records noting instructional technologies or individualized or culturally/linguistically relevant instruction, and three pilot districts do not have records for monitoring attendance or advocating for student needs. This absence does not mean that there are no systematic efforts to monitor attendance or to advocate for students, but rather that these local efforts may not be viewed or categorized as dropout prevention. Systemic/policy renewal is not a core strategy in five districts.

Another use is to search for the most commonly targeted service goals. In six pilot districts the greatest number of programs and policies targets improving academic performance. The other three districts have more programs and policies targeting increasing school attachment, decreasing truancy, and providing support during transitions. Seven districts have at least one program or policy targeting each of the nine service goals. Two districts target seven of the nine; school safety and environment is not a specified goal in either district. Again, it is possible that programs and policies not categorized as dropout prevention address these goals in those districts.

The database can be used to show variations in how districts address dropout. In four pilot districts the greatest number of programs and policies targets subsets of students designated as at risk because they are members of particular segments of the school population, such as pregnant teens and English language learners (a selected intervention). In two districts the greatest number of programs and policies targets individuals who have exhibited behaviors, such as failing grades, that put them at high risk for dropout (an indicated intervention).

Or consider another possibility: searching for districts by the racial/ethnic composition of their student population to see whether core strategies differ. In the nine pilot districts African American students are the largest racial group in three districts, White students in three, and Hispanic students in three. The most frequently used core strategies can be obtained by searching the core strategies in each type of district using the database and manually ranking the strategies by the number of programs using them (table 6).

The database can be used to examine how service goals vary by district student population—say, the share of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (table 7). Because all nine pilot districts have more than half their students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, districts are broken down

TABLE 6

The top five core strategies in the pilot districts, by the predominant race/ethnicity of the district student body (rank order)

Core strategy	Predominant race/ethnicity of student population		
	African American	White	Hispanic
Case management/ service coordination		3	4
Community collaboration	2		1
Engaging and supporting families	4		
Individualized or culturally/ linguistically relevant instruction		1	
Monitoring attendance	5		
Providing social and emotional support during transitions		2	
Social and emotional learning curricula	1	3	4
Transforming the school environment			2
Tutoring/extra classes	2	3	2

Note: Duplicate numbers indicate a tie in the number of programs using the strategy. The predominant race/ethnicity is the race/ethnicity represented by the highest percentage of students in a district.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data described in appendix B.

TABLE 7

Service goals in the pilot districts, by share of district student population eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (rank order)

Service goal	Districts with more than 75% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	Districts with 50%–75% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
Address behavioral challenges	6	5
Address school safety and environment	9	9
Decrease truancy	5	4
Improve academic performance	1	1
Increase school attachment	3	2
Promote college planning and linkages	2	6
Provide career planning and preparation	3	7
Provide mental health support	8	8
Provide support during transitions	6	2

Note: Duplicate numbers indicate a tie in the number of programs using these strategies.

Source: Authors' analysis based on data described in appendix B.

into only two categories (50–75 percent of students eligible and over 75 percent of students eligible). More categories can be added as the database is expanded to accommodate the greater diversity of student populations across districts. As before, the most-cited service goals were obtained by searching districts within each income category and manually ranking goals by the number of programs targeting each.

The database contains information on when programs and policies were put in place and when they ended, making it possible to identify new initiatives and ongoing or longer term ones—important

because many districts are developing more coordinated and systematic dropout prevention programs and policies and because keeping the database up-to-date will be essential for maintaining it as a useful resource. In Springfield Central High School the Ninth Grade Academic Pilot Team, which assigns 125 9th grade students into smaller teams with four core teachers, was launched during the 2006/07 school year. The Polly T. McCabe Transitional School, an alternative high school that provides a smaller learning environment and additional support for pregnant teens and teen mothers in New Haven, was founded in 1960.

The database will continue to change over time, as is evident in the many new programs developed in recent years. New Bedford recently created a Dropout Prevention Office, hiring two dropout prevention specialists for the district, creating an official districtwide flowchart (referred to as the "algorithm") for school staff to use when a student is considering dropping out, and forming an Alternative Education Task Force to gather communitywide input on developing the best alternatives for students at risk of dropping out. Rochester has several new dropout initiatives for 2007/08, including more funding for alternative programs and a partnership to allow former dropouts to take courses for their high school diploma at a local community college. And several of the pilot districts have received funding over

the past four years to implement Smaller Learning Communities in their schools, often through creating new Career Academies, a What Works Clearinghouse–reviewed program.

When information from more districts is available, the database will be able to provide data on other sorts of questions as well. Table 8 shows how the database can be used to rank district programs and policies by the number of students participating and the intervention level.

This type of information is useful because data from the pilot districts indicate that the number of students reached by each program or policy is highly variable. Some intensive or pilot programs are implemented with few students (44 students are in Syracuse Choice, for example). Career Academies, however, is a whole-school program implemented in eight districts, reaching more than 5,000 students in Rochester alone. The Adult Diploma Evening Program and Credit Recovery Program in Providence, which allow seniors or dropouts to recover credits needed for graduation, serve about 430 students during the year.

Another possible use of the database is to examine how the balance of universal, indicated, and selected programs within a given district changes over time (table 9).

TABLE 8
Sample table shell for displaying data on the number of students reached, by program or intervention level and policy

Program or policy level	District A	District B	District C	District D	District E
Universal					
Program 1					
Program 2					
Selected					
Program 3					
Program 4					
Indicated					
Program 5					
Program 6					

Source: Authors' analysis based on data described in appendix B.

TABLE 9

Sample table shell for displaying data on students in a district reached by policies and programs, by intervention level over time

Program or policy level	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Universal					
Program 1					
Program 2					
Selected					
Program 3					
Program 4					
Indicated					
Program 5					
Program 6					

Source: Authors' analysis based on data described in appendix B.

TABLE 10

Sample table shell for displaying data on number of students reached in cities, by intervention level and size of district

Program or policy level	Large cities	Mid-size cities	Small cities
Universal			
Program 1			
Program 2			
Selected			
Program 3			
Program 4			
Indicated			
Program 5			
Program 6			

Source: Authors' analysis based on data described in appendix B.

The database can also show whether program choice differs by district characteristics. In table 10 the results would be limited to urban districts and sorted by size.

USING THE DATABASE TO IDENTIFY WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE–REVIEWED PROGRAMS IN THE PILOT DISTRICTS

The database identifies whether a program or policy has been reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse. Two programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse, Talent Search and Career Academies, had been implemented by at least one pilot district as of June 2007. None of the districts was using the other 10 programs reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse as of June 2007, and none was using a What Works Clearinghouse-reviewed program that has mixed effects or no discernible effects.

Talent Search is a program for middle school and high school students from low-income families who would be the first generation in their families to attend college. Students apply for the program and engage in activities to support career exploration and college application. Established more

than 30 years ago, Career Academies focuses on schoolwide, systemic change to lower dropout rates. High schools are organized as small learning communities and incorporate academic and technical curricula around a career theme. Schools also establish partnerships with local employers to provide work-based learning.

The What Works Clearinghouse found Career Academies to have potentially positive effects (evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence) in helping students stay in school or progress in school. Talent Search was found to have a potentially positive effect on helping students complete school. Key informants, however, were not necessarily aware that the programs received these ratings, perhaps because the reviews have only recently been released. Implementing districts typically had external, rather than district, funding to support implementation (noted in the database).

Talent Search is implemented in five pilot districts. The number of students participating in the program varies, depending on the number of schools in the program. In Bridgeport about 800 students participate in the program across six schools, and the program targets both middle school and high school students. About 500 students participate in Lowell, 346 students in Providence, and 150 students in New Bedford and Springfield. In Springfield the program is offered primarily to students in grades 11 and 12 in two schools.

The Career Academies program is used in eight districts. As with Talent Search, student participation varies, largely due to differences in implementation scope. In Rochester two large high schools, Edison and Franklin, were subdivided into separate career-focused schools, each with its own principal. In Bridgeport students at Bassick High School are assigned to Achievement Academies in grade 9 and move into Career Academies in grades 11 and 12, but students are not considered part of distinct schools as in Rochester. The smallest and newest Career Academy at Bassick includes about 30 students, but the Bioscience and Health Career

High School at Franklin High School in Rochester enrolls about 550 students in grades 7–12.

Several programs and policies implemented by multiple districts have not been reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse. These include Gear Up, Upward Bound, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, partnerships with local Job Corps, and credit recovery policies (in which students have the opportunity to catch up on deficient credits while continuing into the next grade with their same-age peers). Some districts are also implementing programs, including alternative schools, specifically for pregnant teens or focused on freshman students (freshman academies or freshman advisories, for example). To be eligible for a What Works Clearinghouse review, programs and policies must meet eligibility criteria, which demand substantial evaluation evidence. To date, such evidence is limited for most programs being used. Reflecting the lack of rigorous evaluation is that most informants could provide only anecdotal evidence of local success (not included in the database).

> **Reflecting the lack of rigorous evaluation is that most informants could provide only anecdotal evidence of local success of programs or policies**

DOCUMENTING PROGRESS TOWARD EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KEEPING STUDENTS IN SCHOOL

This report has limitations. One relates to the accuracy and completeness of the data, which were collected from a subset of key informants, beginning with top district officials and continuing with those identified by others as knowledgeable about local programs and policies. Interviews with other key informants might yield slightly different information. In addition, because most pilot districts did not have official district documentation identifying which programs and policies constituted dropout prevention, some programs and policies in the database reflect key informants' interpretations. Project data were drawn from

multiple sources, however, so the findings should be fairly accurate and complete. If information on a program or policy in publicly available documents was inconsistent with information from an informant, researchers verified the accuracy of the public information with the informant or others as needed.

A second limitation is that the information is static, reflecting programs and policies implemented (or recently implemented, if discontinued) during the data collection period (about six months). One objective of the project was to create a database that could be updated and maintained over time. The project gives a baseline for documenting and monitoring changes in the nine pilot districts.

> **The database can become a living resource that documents and supports information-sharing by districts facing similar challenges**

The completion of the pilot phase with the first nine districts provides an opportunity to move forward with data collection in other districts. More districts can be added to the database—and the database can continue to be used to monitor progress toward evidence-based practices in the pilot districts. That expansion would create greater knowledge of what districts across the country are doing and could spark new collaboration and information-sharing among districts implementing similar programs and policies. This report makes three recommendations to better document progress, in the region and nationally, toward evidence-based practices for keeping students in school.

- Move beyond the pilot phase with nine districts to collect data on dropout prevention programs and policies being implemented in districts across the country. This could be done through an effort across regional educational laboratories and by a collaborating center such as the National Lab Network. Through that effort, regional educational laboratories could be invited, by the National Lab Network or another organization, to review and provide input on the protocol and database. This would ensure that the database elements and definitions are comprehensive and apply to districts, programs, and policies nationwide. New regional efforts can then be coordinated to collect similar data on samples of districts using the protocol and searchable database. The Northeast and Islands Region could work with the collaborating center to make the protocol and database available in other formats (online, for example).

- Develop and implement a sampling plan to catalog dropout prevention programs and policies in Puerto Rico, where large proportions of students are at high risk of dropping out.

- Expand the database to monitor changes in dropout prevention programs and policies and adoption of evidence-based practices in the initial pilot sites—and to include a greater diversity of districts within the region, especially larger cities where many students are at risk of dropping out. As part of this expansion, the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory and partner organizations will need to develop a plan for sampling and data collection in larger districts such as Boston, Buffalo, and New York. The database can be revised and updated as new data are collected.

These recommendations can make the database a living resource that documents and supports information-sharing by districts facing similar challenges, in the Northeast and Islands Region and nationwide.

NOTES

1. According to the Connecticut State Department of Education web site, the cumulative dropout rate is a class rate that reflects the proportion of students within a high school class who dropped out of school across four consecutive years (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2007b).

2. On the Massachusetts Department of Education web site, *low-income* is defined as "an indication of whether a student meets any one of the following definitions of low income: 1. The student is eligible for free or reduced price lunch; or 2. The student receives Transitional Aid to Families benefits; or 3. The student is eligible for food stamps."

3. The annual dropout rate, according to the Massachusetts Department of Education, "indicates the percentage of students in grades 9–12 who dropped out of school between July 1 and June 30 prior to the listed year and who did not return to school by the following October 1" (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2007a).

4. Functional requirements and the organizational schema for the cataloging tool were created in consultation with PowerWeb Results. FileMaker Pro was selected for creating the database because of its versatility, ease of use, and availability.

5. One district originally approached (Hartford, Connecticut) requested that, due to reorganization, data collection be postponed until the 2007/08 school year. This district was replaced by New Bedford, Massachusetts, which has a profile similar to that of the other sites.

6. A confidentiality agreement prevents disclosure of the specific informant.

APPENDIX A
USERS GUIDE FOR ACCESSING AND SEARCHING THE DROPOUT PREVENTION DATABASE

This appendix provides instructions on how to access and search the Dropout Prevention Database. Although the pilot project discussed in the report was conducted in only nine districts in the Northeast and Islands Region, the database is intended to be a living resource that can be updated and maintained over time to reflect changes as school districts add and drop programs and policies, expanding to other districts within the region and across the nation. Thus, the number of records in the database will differ from those detailed in this Issues & Answers report.

The database can be used to search for programs and policies matching specific criteria, as determined by the user. Examples of such criteria are core prevention strategies (such as community learning curricula and tutoring/extra classes), grade levels, service goals (such as increased school attachment and decreased truancy), in-school and out-of-school staff involvement, and whether programs were reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) (U.S. Department of Education 2007). The primary purpose of the database is to provide information to education professionals interested in learning more about what is being done in the field to address school dropout; it also aims to increase communication and collaboration across states and districts on strategies and lessons. The database, with information about actual districts, can also help facilitate networking and collaboration between educators interested in implementing programs to keep students engaged in school.
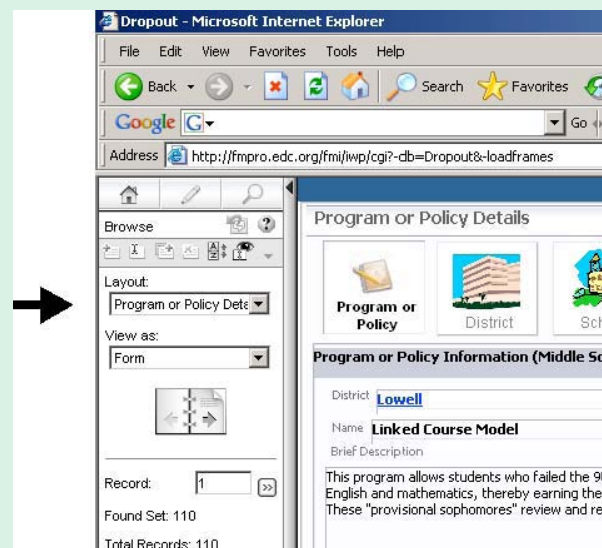
Logging in to the database

Users can access the database online at http://www.relnei.org/research.educational.dropoutdb.php.

An account name and password from REL Northeast and Islands are needed to log in to the database. To receive an account name and password, contact dropoutprevention@edc.org.

FIGURE A1
Changing the page layout

Viewing different page layouts

After logging in, users are brought to the Program or Policy Details page. The searchable database is divided into four types of interlinked page layouts:

- The Program or Policy Details page.

- The District Details page.

- The School Details page.

- The Programs List View Read-Only page.

To move to a different page layout, users can use the *Layout* pulldown menu on the left navigation bar (figure A1) or the illustrated buttons at the top of the page.

Accessing content in each type of page layout

This section describes the fields for each type of page layout.

Program or Policy Details page. The Program or Policy Details page provides a comprehensive snapshot of each dropout prevention program or

TABLE A1

Database fields for the Program or Policy Details page

Field	Definition
District	The district where the program or policy is being implemented. Clicking on the district name takes users to the District Details page for that district.
State	The state where the district is located.
Name	The formal or informal (as provided by interviewees) title or name of the program or policy.
Brief description	One to three sentences describing the program or policy and the target population. A Web site address is provided, if available.
Schools running the program or policy	A link to the Schools Details page of the schools that implemented the program or policy. The list may not be exhaustive if additional schools began implementation after the program was entered into the database.
Core strategies	The core strategies that the program uses to address or prevent dropouts. Strategies related to early intervention are not included, reflecting the target grades of the programs in the database. Table 1 in the main text lists the core strategies, along with brief definitions of the strategies that are included in the database. Programs may incorporate more than one strategy.
Intervention level	Whether the program or policy uses a universal, selected, or indicated approach to dropout prevention, using definitions established by the Institute of Medicine (Institute of Medicine 1994). A *universal* approach targets the entire student population. A *selected* approach targets subsets of the population considered at risk for dropout because of their membership in a particular segment of a population. An *indicated* approach targets individuals who have exhibited behaviors that put them at high risk for dropout. If a multicomponent program uses more than one approach, the database includes the most inclusive approach.
Program reviewed by WWC	Whether the program has been reviewed by the WWC.
Service goals	The specific service goals targeted by each program or policy as a means of helping a student stay in school, progress in school, or complete school. The goals are: • Address behavioral needs. • Promote college planning and linkages. • Address school safety and environment. • Provide career planning and preparation. • Decrease truancy. • Provide mental health support. • Improve academic performance. • Provide support during transitions. • Increase school attachment. These goals have been identified in the literature as being associated with dropout prevention (Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison 2006; Dynarski and Gleason, 2002; Neild and Balfanz 2006; Rumberger 2001).
In-school staff involvement	Information about the type of in-school staffing needed to adequately implement the program or policy. In-school staffing includes: • Adjustment counselor. • Psychologist/therapist. • Behavioral resource officer. • Resource officer. • Crisis counselor. • School nurse. • Day care providers. • School-wide. • Director. • Security guard. • Dropout specialist. • Social worker. • Grant writer. • Special education staff. • Guidance counselor. • Support specialist. • Nutrition counselor. • Student advocate. • Paraprofessional. • Teacher. • Parent-community liaison. • Truancy/attendance officer. • Principal/administrator. • Tutor.

TABLE A1 (CONTINUED)
Database fields for the Program or Policy Details page

Field	Definition
Out-of-school staff involvement	Information about the type of out-of-school staffing needed to adequately implement the program or policy. Out-of-school staffing includes: • Americorps. • Community-based organization. • Corporate. • Department of Youth Services or Department of Social Services Health Clinic. • Job corps. • Local higher education. • Mental health services. • Mentoring program. • Parents. • Police. • Religious affiliates. • Truancy court. • Tutor. • Other volunteer.
Target grades/gender of participants/ethnicity of participants	Whether a program targets specific grades and includes the approximate breakdown of gender of participants or race/ethnicity of participants.
Number of participants	The estimated number of participants, as available.
Notes on enrollment	More qualitative information on enrollment (such as whether the number reflects a range or a number per school). It includes school year reflected in the number of participants field and past enrollment, by year, if available.
Specific target populations	Which, if any, populations that previous studies have identified as being "at risk" for dropping out the program targets: • Academic needs. • ELL (English language learner students). • 1st gen. college (students who would be part of the first generation in their family to attend college). • Low SES (socioeconomic status). • Pregnant teens/teen mothers. • Re-entry (students returning from incarceration). • Special needs (behavioral needs, learning disabilities, and mental health needs). • Truant or absent (students who are chronically truant or absent).
Funding sources	The funding sources for the program or policy. Funding sources include district, state, and federal government funding as well as private organizations.
Approximate cost to implement	The yearly costs to run the program or policy, if available. Most cost information is approximate and could differ greatly based on the scope of the program, the number of program participants, and available funding.
Start date/end date/reason for discontinuation/notes	The start and end dates of the program and the reason for discontinuation (if applicable) as well as miscellaneous additional notes.

policy in the database. For each program or policy record the page includes fields that reflect, for example, service goals, core strategies, staffing, and whether the program is a WWC-reviewed dropout prevention program. Table A1 lists the fields and their definitions that appear on the Program or Policy Details page.

District Details page. The District Details page provides a snapshot of each of the pilot districts and the programs and policies they are implementing

to address dropout. Table A2 lists the fields and their definitions that appear on the Program or Policy Details page.

School Details page. The School Details page shows which dropout prevention programs and policies are being implemented at a particular school in a particular district. The fields are district name, name of the school, and school type (high school, high school—magnet, high school—charter, middle school, middle school—magnet, middle

TABLE A2
Database fields for the Program or Policy Details page

Field	Definition
District information	District name, state, number of schools, demographic information about the student population, and a link to the district's Web site.
Demographics	Student population, city population, % LEP (students with limited English proficiency), % free or reduced-price lunch (students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), and student ethnicity percent (Asian, Black, Latino, Native American, White, Multirace, or Other).
District programs or policy	An alphabetical list of all the programs being implemented in the district that are included in the database. Clicking on the program name takes users to the Program or Policy Details page and the specific record for that program.
Schools within the database	An alphabetical list of all schools in the database in the district that are implementing one or more programs. Clicking on the school name takes users to the School Details page for that school.
District information by year	Data on the dropout rate and the graduation rate of the district, with the most current data available from state departments of education and district Web sites. The school year reflected by the data is noted. The percent of students who are Asian, Black, Latino, Native American, and White is also noted.

school—charter, elementary school, and alternative). Like the District Details page, the School Details page includes a list of dropout prevention programs or policies at the school, with links to the corresponding program page as well as the school's district page. The School Details page lists only schools that are implementing one or more programs included in the database.

Programs List View Read-Only page. The Programs List View Read-Only page lists all the prevention programs or policies in the database and the corresponding districts. The lists can be sorted by program name or by district, and a link leads to the Program or Policy Details page or District page for each program.

FIGURE A2
Moving from record to record using *Previous* and *Next* buttons

On the Program List View Read-Only page the arrows on the notebook allow users to scroll through the different pages of the list. Each page contains 25 records.

Navigating through records in each page layout

To move from record to record on the Program or Policy Details page, the District Details page, and the Schools Details page, users can click the green *Previous* and *Next* buttons located in the top right corner of the page (figure A2) or click the pages of the notebook on the left navigation bar (figure A3). To move to a particular record, users can enter the number of the desired record in the *Record* field just below the notebook and press the *Enter* or *Return* key (figure A4).

Sorting results in the Program List View Read-Only page

On the Program List View Read-Only page, users can click the arrows to the left of "District" to sort in ascending or descending order by district or the arrows to the left of "Program Name" to sort in ascending or descending order by program name (figure A5).
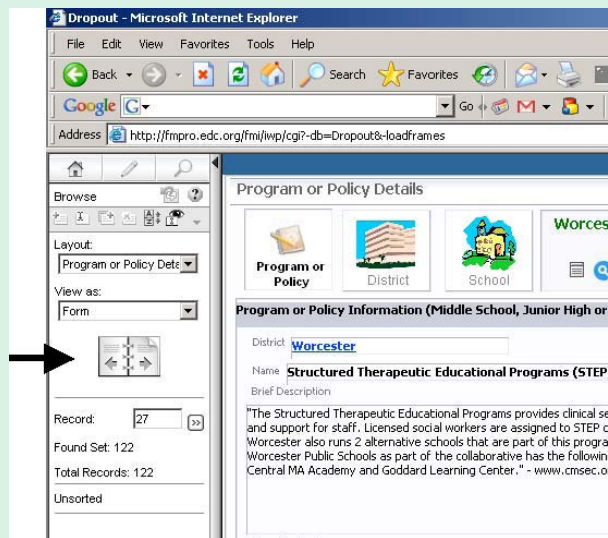
FIGURE A3

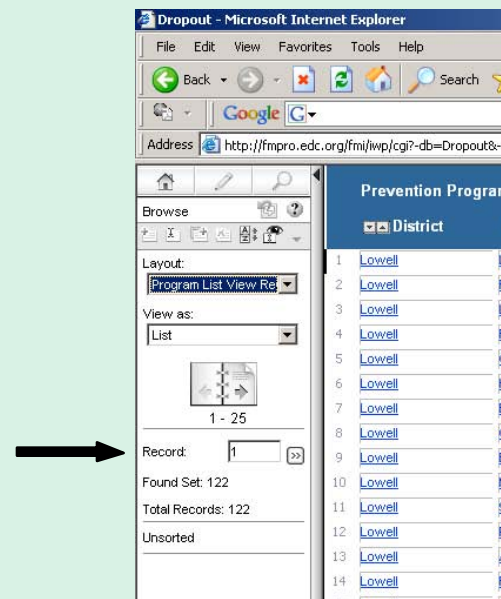**Moving from record to record using the notebook**

FIGURE A4

Jumping to a particular record

FIGURE A5

Sorting by district or program name

Searching the database

Searches using customized criteria can be conducted in all four page layouts.

Program or Policy Details page. To search for records meeting specific criteria on the Program or Policy Details page, users must first select *Show All Records* (the eye icon under *Browse* on the left navigation bar; figure A6).

Clicking the *Find* button (the blue circle with a magnifying glass; figure A7) at the top middle of the page will open a blank Program or Policy Details form, which can be used to conduct a search across all records. Note that the search results will not include records with blank fields.

To search by program name, users must enter all or some of the program name into *Name* and click *Perform Find* on the left navigation bar (figure A8).

To search by criteria, users must select the criteria for which they would like to find a matching program or policy and then click *Perform Find*.
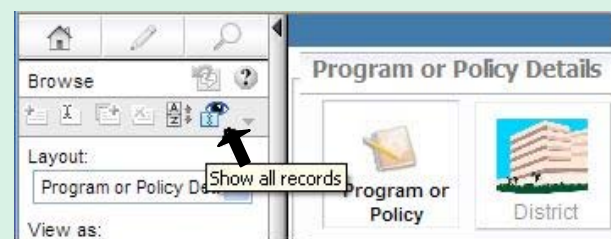
FIGURE A6

Showing all records on the Program or Policy Details page

FIGURE A7

Locating the *Find* button to conduct a search

FIGURE A8
Locating the *Perform Find* button

The database will find all records that match both criteria.

To search for programs reviewed by WWC, users must click *Yes* in that field before clicking *Perform Find.*

To see the matching programs in list view, users must select *Program List View* under *Layout.*

To go back to accessing all records, users must select *Show All Records* (the eye icon under *Browse* on the left navigation bar).

District Details page. To search in the District Details page, users must first select on *Show All Records* (the eye icon under *Browse* on the left navigation bar). Clicking the *Find* button (the blue circle with a magnifying glass) at the top middle of the page will open a blank District form, which can be used to conduct a search across all records.

To search for programs in each district, users must type the district name next to *District Name* and click *Perform Find* on the left navigation bar.

To search for districts that match certain demographic criteria, users must enter in the criteria with a symbol and percentage as a decimal (for example, *>0.50* under *Free and Reduced-Price Lunch,* to see only the districts with more than 50 percent of the student population eligible for free

or reduced-price lunch) and then click *Perform Find* on the left side.

To go back to accessing all records, users must select *Show All Records* (the eye icon under *Browse* on the left navigation bar).

School Details page. To search the School Details Page, users must first select *Show All Records* (the eye icon under *Browse* on the left navigation bar). Clicking the *Find* button (the blue circle with a magnifying glass) at the top middle of the page will open a blank School form, which can be used to conduct a search across all records.

Users can enter a school name or district or select a type of school and then click *Perform Find* to conduct a search for schools matching their criteria.
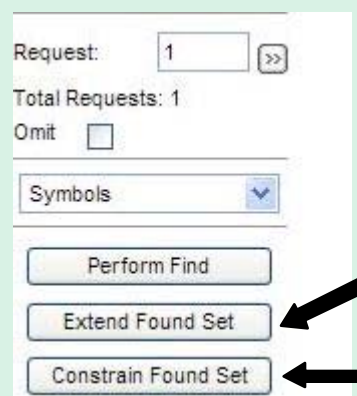
Extending and constraining search results

Users can extend or constrain their search results to better match their search criteria using the respective buttons on the left navigation bar (figure A9).

Extend Found Set. The *Extend Found Set* function is useful for finding records that meet one criterion or another—for example, a search on the District Details page that would show schools in

FIGURE A9
Locating the Extend Found Set and Constrain Found Set buttons

districts of cities with populations greater than 170,000 or schools that have a percentage of Latino students greater than 40 percent.

To use Extend Found Set, click the *Find* button on the District Details page, enter the first criteria in the proper field and then click *Perform Find.* Click *Find* again (the blue magnifying glass), enter the second criteria in the proper field and then click the *Extend Found Set* button. Note that commas must be omitted and decimals must be used for percentages to perform the search properly.

The green *Previous* and *Next* buttons on the top right of the page or the notebook icon on the left side navigation bar to scroll through the search results.

Constrain Found Set. Because the database is able to find records matching multiple criteria, the *Constrain Found Set* button is most useful when users want to omit records from the search results. For example, a user may want to find programs or policies that target only middle school students. If the user searches for these programs or policies by conducting a search for "6," "7," and "8" in target grades, the search results will likely include programs or policies that targeting those grades as well as high school students. To limit the results to programs or policies implemented only in middle schools, the user would need to use the *Constrain Found Set*, *Omit,* and *Extend Found Set* functions (figure A10). To do so, the user would first conduct three searches, using *Extend Found Set* to find all programs that include students in grades 6, 7, and 8 in the target audience. The user would then use the *Constrain Found Set* and *Omit* functions to remove records that include high school grades. To do this, the user would click the *Omit* button, select a grade to omit, and click *Constrain Found Set.* Each high school grade would need to be omitted separately, so four separate searches (to omit grades 9, 10, 11, and 12) would be needed.

Using other navigation buttons

After selecting *Find* (the blue magnifying glass) and performing searches in the database, four

FIGURE A10
Locating the *Constrain Found Set* and *Omit* buttons
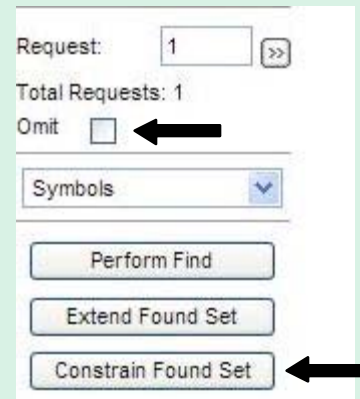
buttons will appear on the left navigation bar (figure A11). These buttons are generated automatically by FileMakerPro as part of its design template and may not be useful to most users:

- *Add New Request* (blue arrow). Provides a function very similar to the *Extend Found Set* function, allowing searches for records that meet one criterion or another.

- *Duplicate Request* (red arrow. Duplicate the last request.

- *Delete Request* (green arrow). Deletes the most recent request.

FIGURE A11
Using other navigation buttons in find mode
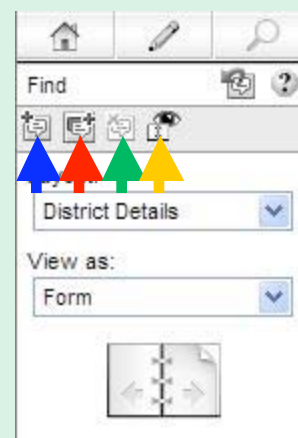
- *Show All Records* (yellow arrow). Is useful for returning to the full records view on a page after conducting a search.

In browse mode (when not conducting a search), the user will see six buttons on the left navigation bar. The first five buttons—*New Record*, *Edit Current Record*, *Duplicate Current Record*, *Delete Record*, and *Sort Record* (indicated by the black arrows in figure A12)—are generated automatically by FileMakerPro as part of its design template and may not be useful to most users. *Show All Records* (indicated by the red arrow in figure A12) is useful for returning to the full records view on a page after conducting a search.

Obtaining sample numbers for tables and table shells in the report

Table 2. To generate numbers for this table:

- Click the *Find* icon (the blue magnifying glass).

- Select one core strategy.

- Click *Perform Find*.

- Extract the total number of records that were generated from each search and put it into cells in the first column.

- Divide the number of records found for each search with the total number of records in the

FIGURE A12
Using other navigation buttons in browse mode

database (124 at the time the table was created) to fill in the second column.

Table 3. To generate numbers for this table:

- Click the *Find* icon (the blue magnifying glass).

- Select one service goal.

- Click *Perform Find*.

- Extract the total number of records that were generated from each search and put it into cells in the first column.

- Divide the number of records found for each search with the total number of records in the database (124 at the time the table was created) to fill in the second column.

Table 4. To generate numbers for this table:

- Click the *Find* icon (the blue magnifying glass).

- Select one core strategy and *9* for target grades.

- Click *Perform Find*.

- Note the number of records that are in the found set for each core strategy.

Table 5. To generate numbers for this table:

- Click the *Find* icon (the blue magnifying glass).

- Select one core strategy and *Yes* under one "Specific Target Population."

- Click *Perform Find*

- Note the number of records that are in the found set and insert into table.

Table 6. To generate numbers for this table, users must review the demographic statistics of districts first. Three of the pilot districts were

predominantly Black, three were predominantly White, and three were predominantly Latino. The database cannot determine predominant race/ethnicity, but it will show the race/ethnicity breakdown of the student population. To search core strategies used among each subset of districts:

- Click the *Find* icon (the blue magnifying glass) and enter "District 1" under "District."

- Click *Perform Find*.

- Click the *Find* icon again, enter "District 2" under "District," and click *Extend Found Set*. Repeat this step for as many districts as needed.

- After all districts are entered, click on the *Find* icon and select a core strategy.

- Click *Constrain Found Set*.

- Note the number of records that use this core strategy. Repeat the steps above for each core strategy.

- Manually rank the strategies based on the number of records found for each strategy.

Table 7. To generate numbers for this table:

- Click the *Find* icon (the blue magnifying glass) on the District Details page.

- Search for districts matching a criterion related to free or reduced-price lunch (for example, to find districts with between 50–75 percent of students eligible, enter "0.5…0.75" in the "% Free/Reduced-Price Lunch" field). Manually note the districts that are found to match the criteria.

- On the Program or Policy Details page conduct a search among the districts noted using *Find* and *Extend Found Set* to add each district as described for table 6. Then, as with table 6, use the *Constrain Found Set* function

to narrow the records by each service goal. Note the number of records that use each service goal and manually rank them.

Table 8. To generate numbers for this table:

- Click the *Find* icon (the blue magnifying glass) on the Program or Policy Details page.

- Select an intervention level and a district.

- Scroll through each record in the found set and record the total number of participants reached in that district by that specific program.

- Repeat these steps for additional districts.

Table 9. To generate numbers for this table:

- Click the *Find* icon (the blue magnifying glass) on the Programs or Policy Details page.

- Search for programs or policies that match a specific intervention level in a district (for example, enter "Lowell" in the district box and select *Universal* under "Intervention Level").

- Scroll through each program.

- Fill in each program name and the number of participants in the table. The Notes on Enrollment field will show which school year is reflected.

- If past enrollment figures have been entered into the database, they can be recorded on the table under the corresponding years. Going forward, users could keep track of enrollment figures each year as they are entered into the database.

Table 10. To generate numbers for this table:

- Click the *Find* icon (the blue magnifying glass) on the District Details.

- Enter the size range of the desired city population (for example, "50000…250000").

- On the Programs and Policy Details page conduct a separate search on each subset of districts using the *Find* and *Extend Found Set* functions to input the subset of districts (as described in table 6) and *Constrain Found Set* to search for programs or policies by intervention level.

- Scroll through each record to note the number of participants reached in each program or policy. (As presented, this table would list programs or policies with their district affiliation, such as "Talent Search – Lowell." Users could choose to report on programs used in multiple districts, such as Talent Search. To do so, they would need to manually calculate the number of students reached across districts.)

APPENDIX B
METHODOLOGY FOR COLLECTING DATA

To inform and field test the protocol and searchable database, project staff worked with nine mid-size cities in the Northeast and Islands Region. Table B1 displays the demographic characteristics of the cities and their students.

The project sought districts for which staff would be able to collect comprehensive information during the project period on programs and policies implemented within the whole district, rather than just in individual schools. Thus, the largest districts in the region (Boston, Buffalo, New York, and San Juan) were excluded for the initial field test. A list of mid-size cities in each state was compiled, with *mid-size city* defined by the Census Bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce as a "central city of a metro area, with the city having a population under 250,000."

Statistics on each city's non-White student population (Hispanic/Latino for ethnicity and African American, not Hispanic or Latino, for race), children living below the poverty line, and dropout rates were reviewed. The nine selected sites are mid-size urban districts with the highest percentage of non-White students, students living below the poverty line, and cumulative dropout rates. Methods of calculation for the cumulative four-year dropout rates and annual rates may vary across states. Annual dropout rates reflect the percentage of students enrolled in a school year (often including the previous summer) who did not return by the following October and who had not transferred to a different school. The four-year cumulative rate reflects the percentage of students in a specific cohort who were enrolled in 9th grade but did not graduate four years later. Each site had a non-White population of at least 23 percent, at least 21 percent of children living below the poverty line, and four-year dropout rates of at least 15 percent.

Taken together, the selected school districts serve more than 200,000 students attending more than 400 schools. Annual dropout rates range from about 4 percent to 9 percent; cumulative four-year dropout rates range from 15 percent to 34 percent. Three states (Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont) and the Virgin Islands did not have mid-size cities that met study criteria (high dropout rates and minority student populations and many children living under the poverty line). As with the region's largest districts, their programs and policies can be cataloged in subsequent years using the protocol and searchable database. One district originally approached (Hartford, Connecticut) requested that, because it was undergoing reorganization, data collection be postponed until the 2007/08 school year. This district was replaced by New Bedford, Massachusetts, which has a profile similar to those of the other sites.

The protocol for systematic data collection

A protocol was developed for compiling information from multiple sources about dropout prevention programs and policies. These sources included publicly available documents related to district and school initiatives, information on evidence-based programs identified by the What Works Clearinghouse and other dropout prevention resources, and interviews with key informants at the district, school, and program levels. Supporting materials, such as introductory letters to school superintendents, interview guides, and templates for the initial recording of information, were developed (see appendixes C and D). The protocol was then field tested in each of the selected districts and refined as needed.

Collecting publicly available information on dropout prevention programs and policies. Following the protocol, staff conducted a comprehensive search of publicly available information on dropout prevention programs and policies in the nine districts. This search provided preliminary, contextual information on what districts were doing to address dropout. Taking this step reduced the burden on respondents and prepared interviewers to ask relevant questions that supplemented rather than duplicated publicly available information.

TABLE B1
Demographic profiles of nine pilot districts

City	Total population	Non-White (percent)	5- to 17-year-olds living below the poverty line (percent)	Total student population	Cumulative four-year dropout rates (percent)	K–12 schools	Race/ethnicity of students in the district (single category, rank order)
Bridgeport, Connecticut	139,529	55.0	21.8	22,828	22.0	38	Hispanic African American White Asian
Lowell, Massachusetts	105,167	31.4	21.8	15,105	16.6	25	White Asian Hispanic African American
New Bedford, Massachusetts	93,768	46.3	30.6	13,106	24.8	27	White Hispanic African American Asian
New Haven, Connecticut	123,626	56.5	31.0	20,047	16.6	50	African American Hispanic White Asian
Providence, Rhode Island	173,618	45.5	36.3	27,900	27.0	54	Hispanic African American White Asian
Rochester, New York	219,773	51.7	33.8	34,598	28.0	62	African American Hispanic White Asian
Springfield, Massachusetts	152,082	44.0	29.8	26,132	33.9	48	Hispanic African American White Asian
Syracuse, New York	147,306	35.7	29.5	22,405	25.0	35	African American White Hispanic Asian
Worcester, Massachusetts	172,000	23.0	21.7	25,028	15.5	47	White Hispanic African American Asian

Note: Because cumulative, four-year dropout rates may be calculated differently across the sites and may be available for different school years, cross-district comparison is not recommended.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006; Massachusetts Department of Education, 2007; Rhode Island Department of Education, 2006; New York State Education Department, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007a, b; Connecticut State Department of Education, 2007b; Providence Public School District, 2007.

The review included a search of web sites of school districts, state and local departments of education, community-based organizations in the school districts or working with the districts, state or local government agencies (such as police department and juvenile court systems), and local sources such as newspapers and television news stations. The information obtained included statements on the

local dropout prevention problem, students at risk, and district and school policies, programs, and budgets. In addition, staff attended regional meetings on dropout prevention and collected written materials. Information was used to tailor district- and program-specific questions for interviews with key informants. It was also coded, if relevant, for entry into the database.

Collecting information from the What Works Clearinghouse review of dropout prevention programs. To assess whether districts are implementing evidence-based programs, project staff obtained information on the What Works Clearinghouse review of dropout prevention programs by contacting colleagues at the What Works Clearinghouse and frequently checking the What Works Clearinghouse web site for updates (http://www.whatworks.ed.gov). As of August 2007, reviews of 10 programs had been completed. Of these, five were rated as having potentially positive or positive effects on students staying in school (Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success [ALAS], Career Academies, Check and Connect, Financial Incentives for Teen Parents to Stay in School, and Twelve Together). In addition, four were found to have potentially positive effects on students progressing in school (including ALAS, Career Academies, Check and Connect, High School Redirection, and Talent Development High Schools), and one had a potentially positive effect on students completing school (Talent Search). Project staff drew from the What Works Clearinghouse dropout prevention review protocol (available on the web site) to develop specific database fields (for example, types of strategies or target populations). To refine database fields, project staff also consulted other reviews of dropout prevention, including strategies defined by the National Dropout Prevention Center.

Collecting information from key informants. As specified in the protocol, project staff made initial contact with the selected districts through an introductory letter describing the project scope and purpose. The letter was mailed to superintendents and school board chairs. Staff followed up a week later by phone or email. One purpose of the initial outreach was to obtain approval for district participation in cataloging. Through staff contact with a key informant at the district level, staff obtained referrals to appropriate knowledgeable sources, such as assistant superintendents, truancy directors, and dropout prevention specialists. Project staff then contacted these referrals by phone or email and sent them the introductory letter as well. Project staff also directly contacted individuals who directed programs, found through publicly available information, which targeted subpopulations of students found to be at elevated risk for dropping out in the literature.

Open-ended and semistructured interview guides were developed for key informants at different levels in a district, with different questions used for each group type and for each individual interview (see appendix D for a sample interview guide). These guides were then tailored through an iterative process for the district, program, expertise, and position of each key informant: information received during one call shaped the information needed and the questions asked during a subsequent call, resulting in interview guides that differed for each key informant. For example, 19 program directors were interviewed, but each director was asked specific questions about his or her program, so the questions differed. Interview questions were designed to elicit information about programs and policies that have dropout prevention, dropout reduction, or school completion as a goal or that focus on populations of students that the dropout prevention literature indicates are at higher risk of dropping out (for example, pregnant teens, students who are old for their grade, students with emotional or behavioral challenges) (Dynarski & Gleason, 2002; Neils & Balfanz, 2006; Rumberger, 2001; Osher et al., 2003). To define *dropout,* project staff referred to event dropout rate, as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics: "students who left school between the beginning of one school year and the beginning of the next without earning a high school diploma or its equivalent (for example, a GED)" (Laird et al., 2006).

The interview guides also took into account the different knowledge bases and perspectives of key informants. For example, superintendents and other district informants gave information on the variety of initiatives under way in their district and overviews of student needs and dropout prevention policies. Key district informants then provided names and contact information, if possible, of other individuals who had more specific knowledge of the programs and policies (for example, school principals or program directors). Project staff followed up with these individuals, many of whom were able to provide additional information about programs for the database and details about implementation and perceived local challenges and successes. Interview questions were emailed to key informants several days before an interview so that they could prepare by checking with colleagues or compiling requested information.

Telephone interviews were designed to take 30–60 minutes and were conducted by trained master's-level staff with experience conducting research in education settings. Training and quality control were conducted by project leaders. With permission, telephone calls were recorded to make a complete record available for coding. Detailed written notes were also taken during the interview and reviewed weekly. A communication log provided up-to-date information about data collection, including the name of the person interviewed, the interviewer, the date, and the time. This repository facilitated entering program information into the database. As interviews were completed, staff members conducted further Internet research on the programs as needed. Key informants were asked to send additional written materials that they believed would be helpful to the project. All

project data, including written notes, audio cassettes, and supplemental materials, were stored at Education Development Center, Inc.

Sample of key informants

A total of 58 representatives across the nine districts participated in project interviews. Informants held key positions at the district, school, and program levels. The average number of key informants per district was six. In all but one district, at least four individuals participated in interviews. Variability in informants per district in part reflects the knowledge base of those initially interviewed and the availability of public documents about dropout prevention programs and policies. The types of positions held by informants and the number interviewed in each position are in box 1 in the main report.

Producing the interactive, searchable database

Working with PowerWeb Results, the research team developed the functional requirements and the organizational schema for the database. FileMaker Pro was selected for the database because of its versatility, ease of use, and availability. The database is searchable by fields: target audiences, prevention strategies, age ranges, in-school and out-of-school staff involvement, and whether the program was reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse. Information can be readily updated and new districts can be added. Programs that are no longer being implemented can be stored, along with information about the dates when they were active. Over the long term the database can thus become a cumulative database of past and present dropout prevention programs and policies in this region or elsewhere.

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY LETTER

November 27, 2006

[ADDRESS]

Dear [Superintendents/School Board Chair]:

The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Lab (NEIREL), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is creating a database of current dropout prevention policies and programs that target urban minority students in our region. This database is being created to:

- Support collaboration across districts around promising strategies to address dropout prevention;

- Identify dropout prevention programs and strategies that school districts believe are effective in targeting and addressing dropout for specific student populations;

- Document local efforts to use evidence-based programs and strategies, such as those identified by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC); and

- Highlight success stories across the Northeast and Islands Region on overcoming potential barriers to the implementation of prevention strategies that may reduce dropout rates.

We will begin collecting information this year on nine public school systems in our region. The [city] school district was chosen as one of the initial districts because of its size (mid-size city) and the diversity of its student population. We'd like to learn from you, as a part of this first group, about the best way to collect information and make it useful for you and other districts in the region.

Recognizing the demands on your time, we have started to collect publicly available information on dropout programs in your district. We would, however, like to supplement and update this information with brief interviews with knowledgeable school officials. We would like to schedule the first interviews to take place in December 2006 and January 2007, and anticipate they will last between 30 and 60 minutes. We will send out questions in advance so those being interviewed are familiar with the topics to be covered. Information collected will be at the district level; we will not collect any personal information.

We will follow-up this letter to answer any questions you may have about the cataloging project and process and to schedule a time that you may be available to participate in an interview. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Athi Myint-U, Ed.M.   Lydia O'Donnell, Ed.D.
Study Leader   Study Leader

**APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS AND
SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

Interviewer instructions

1. Introduce the purpose of the phone interview:

   Thank you for agreeing to speak with me
   today about the kinds of dropout prevention
   policies and programs that are being initi-
   ated in the [name of school district] school
   district. The purpose of this project is to
   collect information on how schools in the
   Northeast and Islands Region of the United
   States are address the challenge of dropout
   prevention

   Before we start, do you have any questions I
   might answer?

2. Ask for permission to record the interview for
   note-taking purposes. State that the infor-
   mation will be used at the district level with
   no personal information collected. The data
   will be used for writing final reports and for
   establishing a database with information on
   what schools in the Northeast are doing to
   reduce dropout rates. State that the interview
   will not take up more than 60 minutes of
   their time.

3. Conduct interview—referring to interview
   questions developed for each interviewee. For
   each program mentioned, try to get compre-
   hensive information to enter into the project
   data file.

4. Request written materials (by mail, fax, or
   email) that may be available on those dropout
   prevention programs and policies mentioned
   and that can help get information for the
   database.

5. Request contact information for other key
   individuals that it may be useful to contact/
   interview for this project.

Sample interview questions: superintendents

1. Can you tell me about [district]'s policy
   regarding dropout prevention (middle, junior,
   or high school)? How is dropout prevention
   defined? Are there specific predictors (e.g.,
   early warning signs) of dropout that [district]
   considers in its approach (e.g., how does
   district define students who are "at risk" for
   dropping out?)?

2. What can you tell me about [district]'s drop-
   out rate (what is the information source/year
   for this)? Has [district] set any goals regarding
   reduction in dropout rates?

3. How does your school district identify stu-
   dents that are "at risk" for dropping out?

4. What are the current dropout prevention pro-
   grams (by name) or strategies that are being
   implemented in [district]? (e.g., who it targets,
   primary outcomes, core strategy, reason for
   selection, dates implemented, cost, if known)?

5. Can you tell me about [district]'s "success sto-
   ries"? That is, a program or strategy that you
   think would be useful for other districts to
   learn about? Why do you think it worked well?

6. Over the last five years, have there been any
   programs that you launched and liked but
   haven't been able to continue? If so, why
   weren't you able to continue them?

7. The What Works Clearinghouse is currently
   issuing new reports based on their review of
   programs that seek to reduce dropout rates.
   Are you aware of the WWC? Are you famil-
   iar with any of the programs that have been
   found to have positive effects on dropout?

   • *If you are familiar with any of the pro-
     grams,* what would it take for the [dis-
     trict] school district to implement the
     programs found effective by WWC in
     your schools? (e.g., knowledge of effective

programs, financial resources, staff resources, administrative support, and buy-in)?

- Have you considered implementing any other programs in [district] that use similar strategies to those reviewed by WWC? I can provide a brief description of the core strategy they use.

- What do you see as barriers to getting these programs, or such programs, running and sustained in [district]? What might it take to get them funded and approved in [district]? Do you envision any barriers to sustaining them in [district] schools once implementation has started?

Thank you for your time!

Sample interview questions: key informant for Syracuse Choice, Syracuse, NY

- What are the overall goal(s) of Syracuse Choice?

- How does Syracuse Choice address dropout in Syracuse?

- How many students are currently enrolled in Syracuse Choice? When did the program first start and how has enrollment changed since then (e.g., has enrollment grown?)?

- Can you tell me about the demographic characteristics of the students who attend the Syracuse Choice (grades, ethnicity, other specific population, e.g., English language learners, special needs)?

- How is it determined who attends the Syracuse Choice? Is it open only to students in the Syracuse School District? How many students would be eligible to enroll in Syracuse Choice, based on need (if space and resources were not an issue)?

- What are the different strategies that Syracuse Choice uses in trying to reach its goals? Does it have an overall philosophy or approach?

- Can you share some "success stories" about Syracuse Choice? How do you know if it's working well (e.g., what percentage of students graduate, go on to college?)?

- How many staff members are involved in Syracuse Choice?

- What is the overall yearly cost to run Syracuse Choice?

- What have been some of the major challenges of running Syracuse Choice?

Thank you for your time!

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