



**Dropout Prevention Breakout Session Notes
Central Texas P-16 Council Meeting
May 11, 2009**

How important is the problem of dropouts?

- Of highest importance - Lost talent, never positive part of our economy (jail, social services, etc)
- We don't differentiate value well → high performing students still drop out
- CTE can help stop dropouts
- Don't forget ECE – it starts there!
- Train staff in addressing diverse needs (including non-academic needs)
- Drop out is “the major symptom” of the other problems we see (social & systematic)
- Not just a school's issue! We need to consider a community's entire infrastructure.
- Parental involvement key to any solution (key→ home visits, looping, reaching out)
- Cyclical process – drop outs lead to cycle of more dropouts
- H.S. may not be relevant in a way that reaches kids' needs (safe, connected, etc)

What are TOP 3 Contributing Conditions / Barriers to Graduation?

- Community infrastructure lacking, especially in outlying areas
- Uneducated parents (mom) – cycle of drop outs
- Lack of foundation of strong ECE
- Many students (e.g. high achievers) still not getting needs met!



- We typically view students/dropouts with deficit perspective. An assets-based framework would enable trying to capitalize on student interests and innate talents and skills
- Change school structure (e.g. ½ day career pathways) to bring in / keep in students that the tradition 7-hour, 8 am – 4 pm school day no longer works because of age, jobs, parenthood)
- Language is a barrier for parents in understanding how to navigate the system and guide their children → Do they know what a hs diploma means in this community and economy?
- Teacher efficacy and preparedness (e.g. Culturally responsive teaching)
- Model of schools 100 years old –
 - not collaborative, little mentoring, a sit and get experience for students
 - isolated, little mentoring, teaching like we're not in the 21st century yet
 - need to change how we teach
- Education systems revolution needed
 - Need a culture of learning, much greater use of technology, the students as learners, participating in their own education, etc
 - Change how we think about culture of learning
- What about teacher dropouts / teacher retention? We lose them just as we do students → Do same conditions of schooling impact both students and teachers?
- THSP may offer models that work

What conditions / barriers contribute the most to the dropout problem here in Central Texas?

Group consensus:

- ECE – cycle of low attainment
- HS retention and assets (relevance)
- Changing the systems
- Teacher preparation and effectiveness
- Community focus & responsibility



What are strategies to address contributing conditions / barriers to high school completion?

(Each comment noted as either “currently in use”, “under development”, or “need to try”.)

- Currently in use: Ongoing teacher coaches & mentors (SMCISD – 2 at each school)
- Need to try: Effective community messaging and involvement (monetary investment)
- Need to try: Need to better craft message and get it to everyone that Education=Economics
- Currently in use: AISD partnership with Spanish media about education – meeting the community in their language
- Need to try: Rethink the whole system (including college system) – not segmented pieces – e.g. need less duplication in higher education
- Currently in use, but need to try more: H.S. Redesign targets relevancy – we know what works (e.g. Garza HS) but then say we can't afford it
- In development: New Tech High showing promise (Akins, ESM, Manor)
- In development: TEA provided data to legislators showing a Return on Investment of \$7 for each \$1 spent on ECE (Texas Seed Project – TECEC)
- Need to try: Document and get out the financial analysis (Return on Investment - \$425 million) – and counteract the general perception that greater ed costs hurts the taxpayer
- In development: Messaging as a theme
 - To parents on how
 - To tax payers on why
 - To students
 - To teens as parents (cost of pregnancy)
- In development: Community partnerships – e.g. TEA early start programs; TWC & TEA → district, childcare providers, Head Start



- System doesn't work for many kids and families and community and economy
- Partnership and collaboration is required
- This is the 21st Century – Global Competition – a nation's most valuable resource is its people

What strategies should Central Texas undertake to prevent dropouts and have more students graduate with a high school diploma?

Group Consensus:

1. Need societal shift that is new, systemic, comprehensive; instilling a culture of E=E
2. System doesn't work for many kids, families, our communities, and our economy
3. Partnership and collaboration is required
4. This is the 21st Century
 - Time to change how we teach
 - The competition is global → The nation's most valuable resource is its people, so we educate the young people now in our schools