

MAINE DROPOUT PREVENTION GUIDE



Institute for the Study of Students At Risk
College of Education and Human Development
University of Maine



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April 2006

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The Maine Dropout Prevention Guide (MDPG) was developed by staff from the Institute for the Study of Students At Risk: William E. Davis, Ph.D., Director; Leslie A. Forstadt, Ph.D., educational consultant; and Roxanne M. Lee, Administrative Assistant II. Research involving the development of the *MDPG* was conducted as part of the Institute's activities related to its current contract with the Maine Department of Education, Division of Special Services, as well as the July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005 project period.

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Finally, we wish to acknowledge the persistent and often extraordinary efforts of those Maine school personnel who work so diligently to support our state's most vulnerable children and youth to prevent them from dropping out of school. We look forward to continuing our relationship with Maine school personnel in our joint efforts to strengthen student dropout prevention programs in Maine.

PURPOSE OF THE MAINE DROPOUT PREVENTION GUIDE

The *Maine Dropout Prevention Guide (MDPG)* is based upon four guiding principles with respect to student dropout prevention.

- ❖ First, it is recognized that the issue of dropout prevention is very complex and does not lend itself to “quick fixes” or simple solutions. Effective dropout prevention must be viewed as a fluid, ongoing process. It must involve broad-based collaboration among schools, parents, agencies, community members and students.
- ❖ Second, it is recognized that the *Maine Dropout Prevention Guide* should be viewed, as its title implies, as a *guide*. It is not intended to serve as a comprehensive review of the student dropout prevention literature. Nor is it intended to function as a cookbook for the development of specific dropout prevention strategies. Rather, the *Guide* should be viewed as a basic information and referral source and as a *starting point* with respect to the many issues and concerns involving student dropout prevention. The *Guide* is intended to serve as a catalyst for discussion and action at the local level.
- ❖ Third, it is recognized that in order for the *Guide* to be effective and practical, it must allow for frequent updating, expansion, and revision. It should *not* be a static written document. Rather, it should allow for the addition of new information as it becomes available and allow for Maine school personnel to share important and relevant information with one another through ongoing dialogue and updates.
- ❖ Fourth, it is recognized that a “one size fits all” student dropout prevention philosophy simply will not work in Maine. Nor will the *Guide* promote such a philosophy. Arguably, some general dropout prevention programs or strategies could be suggested as being effective for *all* Maine schools. However, it is urged that *local* demographics, conditions, and factors be taken into consideration in the process of developing and implementing effective dropout prevention programs. Clearly, the design of these programs will be quite different depending upon the level of students being served, (e.g., elementary, middle, or high school level). School size; location; availability of human, fiscal, community, and agency resources; and current programming within the school district represent only a few of the many factors and conditions to consider when developing and implementing effective student dropout prevention programs and strategies.

The overall purpose of the *MDPG* is to provide Maine public school personnel with a basic resource tool to assist them in their efforts to (1) keep currently enrolled students in school and on track toward completing their high school graduation requirements; and (2) encourage those students who have already dropped out to return to school and complete their secondary school graduation requirements.

The *MDPG* is designed to provide Dropout Prevention Committee (DPC) members and school personnel with research-based information about effective dropout prevention programs and strategies. The authors of this *Guide* recognize that dropout prevention efforts must actively and meaningfully involve the entire community, including parents, citizens, businesses, other agencies, and, most of all, the *students themselves*. School personnel alone cannot, and should not, be expected to solve the “dropout problem.” Nevertheless, the *reality* is that DPC members often find themselves in the practice of having to develop and implement dropout prevention programs in the absence of collaborative efforts. Thus, most of the material contained in the *Guide* focuses on school-based programs, strategies, and interventions. These are the programs, strategies, and interventions over which school personnel typically have the most control.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MDPG

The *Maine Dropout Prevention Guide (MDPG)* is intended to be a hands-on resource tool for school personnel, in general, and for Dropout Prevention Committees (DPCs) in particular, to use in their efforts to prevent students from dropping out of school. The *Guide* includes (1) an overview of the most recent national and Maine dropout and school completion data; (2) a summary of the essential components of federal and Maine legislation involving dropouts and at-risk students; (3) a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of Dropout Prevention Committees; including specific suggestions for the development of effective student dropout prevention plans; (4) a review of the research literature involving the major factors and conditions that place students at risk for dropping out; (5) suggested models for predicting which students may be at highest risk for leaving school; (6) strategies for conducting an assessment of the local school culture involving student dropout issues; and (7) an analysis of the major approaches, programs, and strategies that have been demonstrated to be effective involving dropout prevention. Many of the strategies and suggestions have been obtained from local sources but most are based upon national research from the field of dropout prevention.

Interspersed throughout the *MDPG* are direct quotations from Maine youth who dropped out of school. Their names have been changed for the purpose of confidentiality.

The *MDPG* is designed to be succinct and easy-to-use. Appendices are provided to give more detailed information and elaboration on specific topics and issues addressed in the main body of the *Guide*. Should greater depth, background, and/or supporting information be desired, supplementary materials are provided in the *Dropout Prevention* section of the Institute for the Study of Students At Risk web site www.umaine.edu/issar/. On the site, specific questions can be directed to Institute staff, and PDF files including research articles and literature reviews on the student dropout issue, can be downloaded.

It is our hope that the *MDPG* will serve as a useful tool to assist members of Maine's Dropout Prevention Committees in their efforts (1) to develop a better understanding of the complex issues and conditions that place students at risk for dropping out of school; (2) to more accurately identify those students at highest risk for dropping out; and (3) to develop an effective comprehensive dropout prevention plan to keep students in school and *on track* toward completing their high school graduation requirements.

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INTRODUCTION

For many years, Maine has developed an enviable record with respect to the high number and percentage of its students who complete high school with a standard diploma. Maine also has a strong record regarding the low number and percentage of its students who drop out of school. Compared to other states, Maine consistently has ranked at, or very near, the top on each of these student and school performance measures. Policymakers, educators, and parents generally have expressed high levels of satisfaction with the overall accomplishments of Maine students and Maine schools regarding these widely recognized measures of success.

Nevertheless, despite Maine's good performance relative to its students' graduation and dropout rates, concern persists that far too many of Maine's students each year fail to complete their secondary school requirements and drop out of school. Dropping out of school is widely viewed as resulting in negative outcomes not only for students themselves but also for their families, their communities, and the state of Maine as a whole.

Reducing the number of Maine students who drop out of school continues to be a major goal of policymakers, the Maine Department of Education, public school administrators, teachers, and support personnel. Interest in this issue has been significantly heightened as a result of current national and state educational reform efforts (*No Child Left Behind Act* and *Maine's System of Learning Results*). These reforms place unprecedented emphasis upon high student academic achievement standards, comprehensive student and school accountability and assessment measures, and more rigorous high school graduation requirements.

Of particular current concern to Maine's educators are the *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* accountability provisions of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* and the impact they have on Maine students and schools. There are three academic indicators specified by the *AYP* provisions of this Act. The first two indicators are student academic progress in both reading and math expected each school year. States also are required to include a third indicator for *AYP* accountability calculations. As its third indicator, Maine has chosen to include *average daily attendance* for elementary schools and *graduation rates* for high schools.

During the past two years discussion among members of the Maine Department of Education's Office of Truancy, Dropout, Reintegration, and Alternative Education Advisory Committee has focused on the specific information that would be useful to Maine public school personnel in their efforts to prevent students from dropping out of school. It was strongly recommended that a *Maine Dropout Prevention Guide (MDPG)* be developed and made available to all Maine public school personnel. The *Guide* was anticipated to be of particular help to Dropout Prevention Committees (DPCs) which are required in all Maine School Administrative Units (SAUs).

Resulting from these discussions with Advisory Committee members (as well as from discussions with Maine public school educators) it was determined that the *Guide* should focus on presenting specific information about (1) identifying the factors and conditions that commonly place Maine students at risk for dropping out and (2) identifying the programs and strategies that have been demonstrated to be the most helpful in keeping students in school and on track toward graduation.

DROPPING OUT: CURRENT STATUS & TRENDS

The Dropout Dilemma

Few topics have generated as much interest and activity among educational researchers and policymakers during the past three decades as that of student dropouts. Graduating with a high school diploma has long been recognized as a minimum requirement for an individual student's eventual success in society as well as a measure of a school's effectiveness. The negative consequences associated with dropping out of school have been widely reported in the professional and lay literature both for student dropouts themselves (e.g., lower income levels over a lifetime, higher unemployment rates, increased likelihood for being arrested and incarcerated, higher rates of substance abuse, increased likelihood of requiring public welfare assistance, etc.) and for society in general (e.g., dramatically higher taxpayer costs related to dropouts' participation in a wide variety of social services programs, the high costs related to imprisonment, significant loss or reduction of federal and state income tax revenue, lower level of participation in civic and community affairs, etc.).

"68 percent of state prison inmates, 59 percent of federal prison inmates, and 62 percent of local prisoners did not graduate from high school. Failure to graduate from high school is associated with a tripling of the likelihood of being imprisoned."

Caroline Wolf Harlow, 2003

As a result of the research on student dropouts, the *most common risk factors* that increase the likelihood of dropping out of school have become almost mantras among researchers, school personnel, and policymakers: low socioeconomic status, membership in a racial/ethnic minority group (especially Black, Latino, and Native American), limited-English proficiency, living in a single-parent household, and low educational attainment level of parents. Similarly, the *reasons why students drop out of school* have been the focus of literally thousands of research studies over the years. Some of these studies have provided empirical evidence. However, most have yielded anecdotal and/or non-conclusive findings.

"Dropouts are about three times as likely as high school completers who do not go on to college to be welfare recipients."

U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002

At the risk of over-simplification, the results of these studies have yielded essentially two basic conclusions. First, dropping out of school is a complex process, resulting from the interaction of several factors and conditions (often interrelated) involving the individual student, family, school, peers, and community. Second, dropping out is not simply the result of academic problems or academic failure, but often results from both academic *and* social problems in school. The single most common reason offered by student dropouts typically is, “*I didn’t like school,*” a very general statement that does not tell us much about the specific issues and concerns of students with respect to their overall schooling experience. The specific reasons why students drop out generally are complex and need to be explored in order to truly address the dropout problem.

National Student Dropout and Graduation Rates

Historically, confusion has reigned with respect to the reporting of student dropout and graduation rates. Most commonly reported student dropout and graduation rates cited in both the professional research and lay literature have been criticized as being flawed to the point of being worthless. Dropout rates, in particular, are viewed as being notoriously unreliable and misleading.

“Most Americans think that if you add the number of dropouts to the number of graduates, you get 100 percent of the students in a school. If you didn’t drop out, you must have graduated. This is almost never true in official statistics.”

Gary Orfield, 2004, p.3

Generally, reported dropout statistics *underestimate* the true number of students who drop out of school. Some fail to include summer dropouts (students who complete one school year but fail to enroll the next). Some fail to include as *dropouts* students who move to adult GED classes. Still others fail to include students in all age groups. For example, students who leave during middle school may not be included in a district’s dropout statistics.

School completion and dropout rates can vary dramatically depending upon the data source. Differences in rates arise because (1) calculations are done on different populations; (2) rates are derived with different methods; and (3) rates based on survey methods generally have large sampling errors (Kaufman, 2004).

Since 1988, the primary source for reporting student dropout and school completion statistics in the United States has been the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Following is a summary of the

general findings of NCES's most recent report involving student dropout and school completion rates in the United States (Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, November, 2004). Please see *Appendix A* for an explanation of (1) the data sources that are used to compile these rates; and (2) how these rates are defined and the methods used to calculate them.

U.S. Student Dropout Rates – 2001 (most current data available)			
<u>*Event Dropout Rates – Total – 5.0%</u>		<u>*Status Dropout Rates – Total – 10.7%</u>	
Sex –		Sex –	
Male	5.6%	Male	12.2%
Female	4.3%	Female	9.3%
Race/Ethnicity –		Race/Ethnicity –	
White, non-Hispanic	4.1%	White, non-Hispanic	7.3%
Black, non-Hispanic	6.3%	Black, non-Hispanic	10.9%
Hispanic	8.8%	Hispanic	27.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.3%	Asian/Pacific Islander	3.6%
Region –		Region –	
Northeast	4.2%	Northeast	8.8%
Midwest	5.1%	Midwest	8.6%
South	5.4%	South	13.1%
West	4.7%	West	10.6%
Family Income –			
Low income	10.7%		
Middle income	5.4%		
High income	1.7%		
*Refer to Appendix A for explanation of <i>event</i> and <i>status</i> dropout rates.			

U.S. Student Completion Rates – 2001			
<u>Status Completion Rate – Total – 86.5%</u>			
Sex –			
Male			84.6%
Female			88.3%
Race/Ethnicity –			
White, non-Hispanic			91.0%
Black, non-Hispanic			85.6%
Hispanic			65.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander			96.1%
Region –			
Northeast			88.7%
Midwest			88.9%
South			83.4%
West			87.0%

In recent years, several researchers have suggested alternative methods for calculating “more accurate and meaningful” student dropout and school completion rates. These studies use some of the same NCES data but in different ways (e.g., Balfanz & Letgers, *Johns Hopkins*

University Center for Social Organization of Schools, 2003; Greene & Winters, *The Manhattan Institute*, 2004; 2005; Haney, Madaus, Abrams, Wheelock, Miao, & Gruia, *The National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy*, 2004; Swanson, *Urban Institute's Education Policy Center*, 2004).

While conceding weaknesses with their data, these researchers argue that their methods and datasets produce much more reliable information with respect to the “true” numbers of students who fail to graduate from U.S. high schools each year, thus providing a more accurate measure of the “true success” of our nation’s K-12 educational system. These researchers further argue that their methods for calculating high school graduation rates, despite their recognized weaknesses, are preferable because they are more consistent with the *AYP graduation requirement provision* of *NCLB*. A comprehensive analysis of the suggested impact of different graduation rate calculation methods is contained in a recent paper published by The Education Trust (“*Getting Honest About Graduation Rates: How States Play the Numbers and Students Lose*”, D. Hall, June, 2005).

Please see *Appendix B* for further information with respect to various student dropout and graduation rate statistics, along with a description of different methods used to calculate these rates.

Maine Student Dropout and School Completion Rates: 2004-2005

The most recent Maine dropout and school completion data are provided in this section of the *MDPG*. The information contained in this section represents only a portion of the data that are available regarding Maine student dropout and school completion rates. However, this information is included to provide readers with a “snapshot” of the current status of the dropout and school completion rates in Maine public schools.

- ❖ The 2004-2005 Maine statewide public secondary school dropout rate was 2.78 percent (1,739 students were considered as “dropouts” out of a secondary school enrollment of 62,653 students). In addition, 118 students were considered as “dropouts” from Maine’s 11 private secondary schools (60% publicly-funded students) which represents a 2.09 percent dropout rate out of an enrollment of 5,641 students. All of Maine’s three state-funded schools showed that no students had dropped out (enrollment – 247 students). Thus, taking into consideration all three reporting categories, the statewide totals for 2004-2005 show a secondary enrollment of 68,541 students, with 1,857 dropouts, and a dropout rate of *2.71 percent*.
- ❖ Student dropout rates in Maine varied by *county* in 2004-2005, ranging from a high of 4.70 percent to a low of 1.51 percent, and by *gender* – males, 3.18 percent; females, 2.38 percent.
- ❖ For the class of 2005, the 12th grade year represented the most common year for dropping out for *females*, while the 12th grade year represented the most common year for dropping out for *males*.

- ❖ The statewide *average* public secondary *school completion rate* for the class of 2005 (excluding private secondary schools and state-funded schools) was 86.92 percent, with a range from 76.56 percent to 93.36 percent among Maine high schools.
- ❖ Female students in Maine complete their secondary school programs at a higher rate than do male students. The statewide *average* public secondary school completion rate for the class of 2005 (excluding private secondary schools and state-funded schools) was 89.09 percent for *females* and 84.83 percent for *males*.

Please see *Appendix C* for further information related to Maine's most recent student dropout and school completion data. For more comprehensive information readers can refer to the web sites of both the Maine Department of Education www.maine.gov/education/enroll/enr/facts.htm and the Institute for the Study of Students At Risk www.umaine.edu/issar/.

Students with Disabilities Dropout and School Completion Rates: National Data

Historically, the percentage of students with disabilities drop out of school consistently has been higher percentages than for their non-disabled peers. However, in recent years, improvement at the national level has been seen in both categories. For example, in 1995-1996, the dropout rate for all students with disabilities age 14 and older was 46.8 percent. During the 2000-2001 school year, the national dropout rate for this population was 41.1 percent. Thus, the national dropout rate for students with disabilities decreased 12.2 percent between 1995-1996 and 2000-2001. Similarly, during this same period the national high school graduation with standard diploma rate for all students with disabilities age 14 and older demonstrated improvement from 42.4 percent in 1995-1996 to 47.6 percent in 2000-2001 (an 12.3 percent increase) (*25th Annual Report to Congress*, 2005).

Precise comparisons between disabled and non-disabled students with respect to both high school completion and dropout rates are not possible due to the differences in which these rates are calculated for each group. Nevertheless, for the purpose of providing a general comparison, the national school completion and dropout rates for *all students* have held fairly constant for several years – 86 percent and 5 percent, respectively.

Graduation and dropout rates for students' age 14 and older vary by *individual disability category* (e.g., *Specific Learning Disability, Speech and Language Impairment, Mental Retardation, Emotional Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Health Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairments, Visual Impairment, Autism, Deaf-Blindness, and Traumatic Brain Injury*). For example, at the *national* level during the 2000-2001 school year [the most recent data available] 65.1 percent of all students

identified within the *Emotional Disability* category dropped out of school. Students within the *Speech and Language Impairment* category dropped out at the next highest rate (39.7%), followed closely by those students identified within the *Specific Learning Disability* category (38.7%) (*25th Annual Report to Congress*, 2005).

Graduation rates at the *national* level for students with disabilities, age 14 and older, (those graduating with a standard high school diploma) during the 2000-2001 school year also varied significantly by disability category. Students within the *Visual Impairments* category graduated at the *highest* rate (65.9%), followed by students identified within the *Hearing Impairments* category (60.3%), and *Traumatic Brain Injury* category (57.5%). Students identified within the *Mental Retardation* (35.0%) and *Emotional Disability* (28.9%) categories were *least likely* to graduate with a standard high school diploma during the 2000-2001 school year (*25th Annual Report to Congress*, 2005).

Maine “Students with Disabilities” Dropout and School Completion Rates

As is true nationally, Maine students with identified disabilities drop out of school at a higher rate than their non-disabled peers. Also, the high school completion rate for these students is lower than for their non-disabled peers. Wide variance exists among individual disability categories with respect to both student dropout and school completion rates for Maine students with disabilities.

The percentage of Maine students with disabilities, age 14 and older, who dropped out of school between December 1, 2004 and December 1, 2005 [December 1, 2005 Child Count Exit Data] was 31 percent. Of all disability categories, students identified within the *Emotional Disability* category recorded the highest dropout rate (55%). Students identified within the *Other Health Impairment* category recorded the second highest dropout rate (35%) followed by *Multiple Disabilities* (28%), *Specific Learning Disability* (26%), and *Mental Retardation* and *Hearing Impairment* categories each at 25 percent (Davis, Artesani, & Lee, 2005).

These particular findings are consistent with disability dropout data at the national level which for several years repeatedly has shown that students within the *Emotional Disability* category are far more likely than students within any of the other categories of special education to drop out. See *Appendix D* for more comprehensive information related to Maine students with disabilities dropout and school completion data.

The percentage of Maine students with disabilities, age 14 and older, who graduated with a standard high school diploma between December 1, 2004 and December 1, 2005 was 64 percent [December 1, 2005 Child Count Exit Data]. Of the major disability categories (those including

the largest number of identified students), students within the *Traumatic Brain Injury* category achieved the highest graduation rate (85%). By a wide margin, students identified within the *Emotional Disability* category recorded the lowest graduation with standard diploma rate (41%) (Davis, Artesani, & Lee, 2005).

Conversely, students identified within the *Speech/Language Impairment* and *Hearing Impairment* categories, not surprisingly, were more likely to graduate with a regular high school diploma, 76% and 75%, respectively (Davis, Artesani, & Lee, 2005).

See *Appendix D* for further information related to Maine students with disabilities dropout and school completion data. For even more comprehensive information, please see our web site: www.umaine.edu/issar/.

FEDERAL AND MAINE STATE DEFINITIONS AND STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS: DROPOUTS, SCHOOL COMPLETERS, AND “AT-RISK STUDENTS”

Federal (*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, Public Law 107-110, enacted January 8, 2002)

- ✓ States must develop performance-based accountability systems, define and measure adequate yearly progress (*AYP*) for student performance, and apply sanctions to schools and districts that fail to meet *AYP* goals. The state accountability systems mandated under *NCLB* must treat academic assessments as the *primary* indicator of performance. However, to provide balance to the definition of *AYP*, states also need to include a *secondary* academic indicator. For high schools, this must be the *high school graduation rate*. This provision was intended to serve as a safeguard to discourage schools from raising the achievement levels by “pushing out” lower-performing students.
- ✓ The statutory definition of *high school graduation rate*: “the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years” (*No Child Left Behind Act*, Section 1111 (b)(2)(C)(vi)).
- ✓ *NCLB* defines a *dropout* as “a student who leaves school for any reason, except death, before completing school with a regular diploma, and does not transfer to another school.” A student who leaves during the year but returns during the reporting period (including a summer program) or who transfers and graduates with a regular diploma from another school is *not* considered a dropout. It is important to note that dropout rates are *not* a required component of *NCLB* accountability.
- ✓ Specific guidelines for measuring graduation rates under *NCLB*: The U.S. Department of Education has issued regulations with respect to who counts as an on-time graduate. *What is a regular diploma?* It is defined as “a high school completion credential that is fully aligned with state academic standards. Alternative credentials (e.g., certificates of attendance, meeting I.E.P. objectives for students with disabilities, GEDs (General Education Development) certificates, etc.) do *not* count. To *graduate on time*, according to Department of Education regulations, students have to complete one grade per year from the beginning of high school, which is usually the ninth grade. Thus, students held back during high school to repeat a grade do not count as graduates, as it would take them longer than four years to finish. These students, however, would not be counted as dropouts either, provided they remained in school and did graduate.
- ✓ States are permitted to employ a definition of a *high school graduation rate* other than the one explicitly described in the legislation (e.g., another definition, developed by an individual state, and approved by the U.S. Department of Education Secretary). Although every state is expected to measure graduation rates in a manner that complies with statutory and regulatory requirements, *they do not have to do so in the same way*. States are provided with considerable leeway in approaching graduation rates. States are not required to use the same formula for calculating a graduation rate. An alternative definition of the high school graduation rate, other than the statutory definition, is allowed.

Maine: Definitions, Relevant Statutes, and Requirements

- ✓ In Maine, a *dropout* is defined as “an individual who leaves school without completing a state or school administrative unit (SAU) approved secondary program. Based upon this rule, the individual was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year or was not enrolled on October 1 of the previous school year although expected to be in membership (i.e., was not reported as a dropout the year before).”

Exceptions to the rule are (1) graduation from high school or completion of a state or school unit approved educational program; (2) transfer to another public school administrative unit, private school, or state or school unit approved educational program; (3) temporary school-recognized absence due to suspension or illness; and (4) death. Students who leave school and enroll in *adult education programs* are counted as dropouts if the school unit is no longer responsible for the enrollment of these students (Maine Department of Education website: www.maine.gov/education/enroll/enrlfacts.htm). *Appendix E* contains more comprehensive information relative to how *dropout status* is defined in Maine.

- ✓ The *High School Completion Rate* is the percentage of students that graduated from their high school with a regular diploma, rather than earning an alternative credential or dropping out of school sometime during their high school years. A separate completion rate is calculated for each graduating class (e.g., the Class of 2004). See *Appendix E* for further information regarding how the *High School Completion Rate* is calculated in Maine.

Maine Education and School Statutes

This section includes specific language contained in Title 20-A of Maine Education and School Statutes specifically related to students at risk and student dropout prevention.

Chapter 125

§4.02.E.2.b Student At Risk of School Failure Identification Plan (as part of the Comprehensive Education Plan) requires *a plan for identifying students at-risk of school failure in kindergarten through grade 12 including, but not limited to, truants and dropouts, and the development of appropriate alternative programs to meet their needs.*

§5103. *Dropout Prevention Committee (DPC): Each superintendent, with school board approval, shall annually establish a separate dropout prevention committee for each individual school unit under the superintendent's supervision.*

Membership requirements and responsibilities of DPCs, including the major components that need to be considered in the development of a “Dropout Prevention Plan,” will be elaborated upon in the following section of the *MDPG*.

Chapter 127 3.04 Alternative Programs

School administrative units shall develop a Personal Learning Plan, aligned with the system of *Learning Results*, for every K-12 student enrolled in an alternative program. Each Personal Learning Plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following components:

A. Role of Alternative Programs

A school administrative unit may establish or participate in one or more programs as alternatives to the regular course of study to meet the needs of students at risk. Alternative programs shall support student social and behavioral development in addition to performance on the content standards of the system of Learning Results.

These programs shall have stated goals, objectives, and procedures for implementing and assessing their effectiveness. Such programs may include interventions such as programs outside the school administrative unit, specialized instructional settings, extended or shortened school day, or extended school year, and may be scheduled outside of the regular school day, if appropriate.

B. Procedural Requirements

School administrative units shall develop a Personal Learning Plan, aligned with the system of *Learning Results*, for every K-12 student enrolled in an alternative program. Each Personal Learning Plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following components:

- (1) A description of the student's academic strengths and the observable or measurable areas in need of improvement.
- (2) A description of the annual educational goals, aligned with the content standards and performance indicators of the system of *Learning Results*, that the student may reasonably be expected to achieve during the school year.
- (3) A description of short-term instructional objectives leading to each annual educational goal.
- (4) A description of the social and behavioral needs that must be addressed for the student to achieve academic success, including strategies to keep the student in school.
- (5) A description of the multiple measures that will provide evidence that the student has achieved each goal.
- (6) For secondary school students, a description of the student's career goals and transitional steps to achieve them.

DROPOUT PREVENTION COMMITTEES (DPCs)

Section §5105 of *Chapter 211: Attendance, Subchapter 5: Dropouts* (MRSA Title 20-A: EDUCATION, Part 3: Elementary and Secondary Education) establishes the roles and responsibilities of dropout prevention committees in Maine public schools. The following provisions apply to the dropout committee:

1. **Committee.** Each superintendent, with school board approval, shall annually establish a separate dropout prevention committee for each individual school unit under the superintendent's supervision.
2. **Membership.** The dropout prevention committee shall be composed of the following members:
 - a. A member of the school board selected by that board;
 - b. A school administrator selected by the superintendent;
 - c. A teacher and a school counselor selected by the school administrative unit's teacher organization;
 - d. A parent selected by the unit's organized parent group, or, if no organized parent group exists, by the school board;
 - e. A school attendance coordinator from the district selected by the superintendent;
 - f. A high school student selected by the dropout prevention committee members selected in paragraphs a-e;
 - g. A dropout selected by the dropout prevention committee members selected in paragraphs a-e;
 - h. A community resident of the district selected by the dropout prevention committee members selected in paragraphs a-e; and
 - i. A dropout prevention committee may increase its membership by majority vote.
3. **Terms and vacancies.** Members shall serve in accordance with policy established by the school board.
4. **Chair.** The dropout prevention committee shall select a chair from among its members.
5. **Responsibilities.** The following provisions apply to the responsibilities of the dropout prevention committee.
 - a. The dropout prevention committee shall:
 1. Study the problem of dropouts, habitual truancy and the need for alternative programs, kindergarten to grade 12;
 2. Make recommendations for addressing the problems; and
 3. Submit a plan of action to the school board, in accordance with section 4502, subsection 5, paragraph L-1.
 - b. The dropout prevention committee shall consider the following when developing its plan:

1. Reasons why students drop out of school;
 2. Maintenance of continuing contacts with recent dropouts in order to extend opportunities for alternate education programs, counseling, and referral;
 3. Education of teachers and administrators about the dropout problem;
 4. Use of human services programs to help dropouts;
 5. The school administrative unit's policies on suspension, expulsion, and other disciplinary action; and
 6. Discriminatory practices and attitudes within the school administrative unit.
6. **Annual report.** The dropout prevention committee shall meet at least annually to review its plan and to make recommendations to the school board.
7. **Department assistance.** The department shall provide technical assistance to a dropout prevention committee on request to the Office of Truancy, Dropout Prevention, and Alternative Education.

Despite the explicit recommendations in Section §5103, a recent study (Davis, Lee, & Davis, 2004) found that in 2004, formal Dropout Prevention Committees (DPCs) were operating in approximately only *one-half* of Maine school districts. For those DPCs that did exist, there was wide variance among them in terms of their defined roles, responsibilities, and activities. Mixed opinions also were expressed regarding the utility of the DPCs. DPCs are likely the most under-used strategy in the state of Maine concerning dropout prevention. These committees can be effective, powerful forces in local dropout prevention if they are organized and implemented well.

Organizational Structure of DPCs

According to Section §5103 cited above, each superintendent, with school board approval, will annually establish a *separate dropout prevention committee for each individual school unit under the superintendent's supervision*. There has been statewide confusion in the interpretation of the term *individual school unit* as defined by Section §5103 with respect to the establishment of DPCs. In order to better understand how Maine superintendents have interpreted this term, numerous superintendents and school administrators were queried regarding this question.

Despite the variance among responses received involving the question of *individual school unit* and its relationship to the school administrative unit (SAU), general consensus appears to exist regarding how *individual school unit* is interpreted specifically as related to the formation of dropout prevention committees. The *specific governance model* under which a particular SAU operates (e.g., municipality, school administrative district (SAD), school union (SU), community school district (CSD), etc.) is being interpreted as constituting the major factor in determining the *number* of dropout prevention committees that are required within each SAU.

As municipalities and SADs fall under one school board, it is most commonly interpreted that *one DPC* is required for the entire school district, in effect, an umbrella district-wide committee which reports annually to the school board. In school unions, two or more towns (or units) are included, each with its own school board to whom the superintendent is responsible. In these situations, DPCs technically would be required for each individual school board (unit) included. Also, in still other cases, a superintendent may have administrative responsibility for both a school union and a community school district (CSD). Technically, in these situations, separate dropout prevention committees would need to be established for *each* school board represented within these combined governance models.

Nevertheless, despite the *technical interpretations* cited above, in practice what appears to be happening throughout Maine (irrespective of the unique governance model) is that most SAUs have established, or are in the process of establishing, one “umbrella, district-wide DPC” with representatives of each unit involved participating on this committee. At the same time, *within* an individual SAU, level-based (elementary, middle, high school) or building-based DPCs generally are organized with their work being “fed into” the larger district-wide DPC. The over-riding, most important aspects to remember, however, with respect to the development of DPCs, irrespective of how they are formally structured, are that (1) they include broad-based representation; and (2) they provide the opportunity to collect, analyze, and report the most critical information involving students at risk for dropping out of school.

The ultimate goal of the DPC is to create *a Dropout Prevention Plan* as specified in Chapter 125 (described in the previous section). This plan is part of the broader *Comprehensive Education Plan*. The Dropout Prevention Plan is designed to *identify* students at-risk of school failure in K-12 including, but not limited to, truants and dropouts, and to *develop* appropriate alternative programs to meet their needs. Alternative programs include alternative instruction as well as separate alternative education programs. Please refer to the section “*Dropout Prevention Approaches and Strategies*” for further information on *alternative education* and *alternative programming*.

The committee must meet *at least* annually. However, to be most effective, the DPC will need to meet more often, particularly in the initial stages of planning. Annual meetings may be adequate for *general reporting* to the school board. However, a single meeting cannot replace the regular, ongoing contact among DPC members that is required if the issue of student dropout prevention is to be taken seriously. The DPC is expected to be knowledgeable about local dropout issues, to be actively problem-solving how to tackle those issues, and to develop outcome measures. To accomplish these goals, it is highly likely that DPCs will need to meet more frequently than once a year.

The membership of the DPC is a highly representative group that includes school administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, current students, dropouts, and community residents. DPC membership need not change each year and term limits can be negotiated by the school board. In addition, the DPC can vote to increase membership if it is determined that key constituents are missing in representation. We recommend having teachers on the DPC from the elementary, middle, and secondary levels in order to comprehensively address the needs of *all* students concerning dropout prevention.

Members of the DPC should consider *student dropout prevention* as consisting of two broad approaches: (1) *comprehensive school improvement* and (2) *targeted programs*. Comprehensive school improvement involves improving instruction, the curriculum, and creating a healthy learning climate for *all* students to prevent school disengagement and to increase their likelihood for staying in school. Targeted programs are designed to (a) prevent students from dropping out of school, and (b) *recover* students who have already dropped out and encourage them to re-enter the educational system.

Strategies for both comprehensive school improvement and targeted programs can be approached in several ways: (1) supplemental and support services (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, counseling, social support services, student after-school programs, etc.) for students considered to be *at risk*; (2) the provision of a variety of alternative education programs designed to provide different learning environments for those students who do not do well in conventional schools or in traditional classes (including off-campus alternative schools, separate alternative schools on campus, and alternative programs within conventional schools); and (3) school-wide restructuring efforts that focus on changing schools so they become more responsive learning environments for *all* students, especially for those students considered to be *at risk* for dropping out.

The Work of the DPC

- ✓ The DPC should collect valid and reliable data to determine which students are at *highest risk* for dropping out.
- ✓ The DPC should advocate for teachers and support them in their efforts to help students, especially those students who are viewed as the most vulnerable for dropping out of school.
- ✓ The DPC should develop a clear and consistent student re-entry policy for those students who have already dropped out.
- ✓ The DPC should have an understanding of the major issues and conditions in elementary, middle, and high schools that contribute to students dropping out.

- ✓ The DPC should know what resources in the community are available (e.g., mental health counseling, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, family counseling, etc.) and how to most efficiently access these resources.
- ✓ The DPC should strive for continuity in membership and consistency in operational procedures.
- ✓ The DPC is responsible for creating a Dropout Prevention Plan as part of the broader Comprehensive Education Plan that will be submitted to the Commissioner of Education.
- ✓ The DPC is responsible for creating a report to be presented annually to the local school board.

“The DPC paints the picture of the student dropout issue in a local community. Its members are the artists, providing the color, imagery, and composition. Their annual presentation to the school board should be an unveiling of a work of art.”

Leslie Forstadt

Creating a Dropout Prevention Plan

The real value of this plan is for local school personnel. The following information and data are important, useful, and, in some cases, necessary, to include in the development of an effective dropout prevention plan:

- ✓ Data regarding the student dropout issue in your community, including school records, information submitted to the Department of Education, counselor information, teacher reports, parent input, and anecdotal data from students and dropouts.
- ✓ The *specific reasons* why students in your community drop out, along with strategies designed to address these reasons. The DPC will want to understand the reasons *why* students drop out. The table below illustrates the most common reasons that dropouts in a national study cited for leaving school.

National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 - First Follow-up Study -	
Reason for Dropping Out	Percentage of Students
School-related	77%
Did not like school	46%
Failing school	39%
Family-related	34%
Work-related	32%
Could not get along with teachers	29%
Got a job	27%

Your students will have their own reasons for wanting to leave school. Similarly, those students who have already dropped out of school will have their reasons why they left. Identifying these reasons will help you in planning dropout prevention strategies. Please refer to the section “*Conducting a Local Assessment*” which describes the steps in performing a self-assessment.

Other components of the Comprehensive Education Dropout Prevention Plan should include:

- ✓ An informed statement of your local dropout problem that clearly summarizes the extent of the problem: How many students drop out? Who drops out (e.g., males and females)? When do they drop out (e.g., year in school)? What are the recent dropout trends (e.g., has the number and percentage of dropouts increased, decreased, or remained stable during the past three years)? What efforts have been made to prevent students from dropping out?
- ✓ A discussion of any gaps in services that are found to contribute to dropping out. For example, if having a substance abuse counselor on staff at the high school to assist students with problems would help prevent them from dropping out, this would be a recommendation the DPC could make.
- ✓ A listing of school and community resources, referral sources, and specific strategies targeted to prevent students from dropping out (e.g., Personal Learning Plans, mentors, tutors, structure of the school day, advisor/advisee groups, small class sizes, differentiated instruction, counseling, alternatives in education, adult education, alternative programming, activities/clubs/sports programs, etc.).
- ✓ A review of current policies and practices that impact students (e.g., “student code of conduct,” discipline policies, SAT referrals, suspension and expulsion policies, student retention policies, referrals to alternative education programs, special education policies and practices regarding student eligibility, student harassment policies, truancy policies, academic credit attainment alternatives, etc.).
- ✓ Plans for professional development opportunities for teachers, staff, and students regarding at-risk youth and dropout prevention (e.g., staff development sessions involving specific topics and issues related to *at-risk* students).

When Should the Dropout Prevention Plan Be Written?

Chapter 125 states that adoption of the Comprehensive Education Dropout Prevention Plan by the school board should occur at the end of the school year, which can coincide with the presentation of the required annual report to the local school board(s). Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, the Superintendent was required to report annually on the Plan to the citizenry and to the Maine Commissioner of Education. If your DPC has no *working* Dropout Prevention Plan, the committee should begin immediately to initiate this effort. The Plan should be viewed as an “ongoing work” that will be revised as needed to serve the needs of the school community.



Dropout Prevention Committees: Q & A

Following are some of the most frequently asked questions regarding DPCs. Responses are offered regarding each of these questions that DPC members may find helpful.

How Many People Are on the Committee?

The actual number of people on the committee will vary, depending upon the school community. DPCs should review their current membership constituencies to ensure as broad representation as possible. Chapter 125 specifies the following members: school administrator, teacher, school counselor, school board member, parent, school attendance coordinator, high school student, a dropout, and a community resident. We recommend having teachers who represent the K-Adult Education spectrum, including special and alternative education programs. As students with disabilities generally drop out at a significantly higher rate than their non-disabled peers, the active participation of special educators on DPCs is vital. Ensuring that a current student and a former student who has dropped out of school are on the DPC is also very important. Research shows that these students can offer important, and often very unique, perspectives related to dropout issues and concerns. Their input should be sought, valued, and respected.

How Often Should Our DPC Meet?

It is required the committee meet annually, but the more often it meets, the better its members will be able to develop an understanding of the unique needs of its students. We recommend meeting *at least* quarterly, and if monthly meetings can be held, all the better. It may be useful to begin in the summer with some planning, have multiple meetings in the fall, and then meet less often in the spring. If subcommittees are formed (e.g. elementary dropout prevention; middle/high school dropout prevention), they may meet monthly, with full committee meetings quarterly, along with a full committee meeting at the end of the year to review and revise the Comprehensive Education Dropout Prevention Plan.

It is fully recognized that most public school personnel already are involved with numerous meetings. However, given the new federal and state student graduation accountability requirements, the work of DPCs likely will become increasingly important in Maine.

What Is the Relationship Between DPCs and Student Assistance Teams?

The relationship between Dropout Prevention Committees and Student Assistance Teams (SATs) frequently is unclear within many school districts. It is recognized that most SATs are involved, either directly or indirectly, with students who might be considered to be at risk for dropping out of school. It is further recognized that within many Maine school districts, the SATs already function as the most visible and most viable group to deal with student dropout issues. However, in some cases it has been assumed that because SATs exist, DPCs are not needed. This is not true. The presence of SATs in school district (even those SATs that are recognized as being particularly effective) does not eliminate the need for a DPC. The DPC should be doing the majority of the comprehensive work concerning dropout prevention in a school district. Clearly, however, well-established SATs can, and should, play a very important role with respect to the implementation of effective student dropout prevention strategies.

What Are Other Ways We Can Improve Our Existing DPC?

- ✓ Superintendents and their School Boards within every Maine SAU should review the current status of their respective DPCs and take whatever actions may be necessary to improve and strengthen them.
- ✓ Involve those members of the school-community who have expressed an interest in, and who may already be active in, the area of dropout prevention. These individuals can be very energizing to the process.
- ✓ Meet!

How Can We Realistically Address the Needs of K-Adult Education with one DPC?

The DPC can be divided into subcommittees or action teams that are designed to specifically address concerns at different age levels. Teachers from elementary, middle, and secondary levels (including representatives from alternative education, special education, adult education, and vocational education) should be involved and their expertise utilized. Thus, the concerns and issues of students at all *grade levels* should be represented and addressed as part of the DPC's work.

Who Can Help Us with the Development and Implementation of the Dropout Prevention Plan?

The *Maine Department of Education* provides technical assistance through Shelley Reed, Consultant for Truancy, Dropout, and Alternative Education (TDAE) at shelley.reed@maine.gov, 207.624.6637. The TDAE web site contains relevant, updated information with respect to the student dropout issue in Maine: www.maine.gov/education/tdae/TruancyDropout.htm. Additional technical assistance may be provided by the *Alternative Education Association of Maine* at <http://aeamaine.org/> and by the *Institute for the Study of Students At Risk* at 207.581.2440 or through the Institute's web site at www.umaine.edu/issar/.

A Final Suggestion for Dropout Prevention Committees

“Cast a wide net...” Researchers Philip Gleason and Mark Dynarski suggest that school personnel interested in student dropout prevention should look at *four types of information* that often are neglected in efforts to identify those students who are at risk for dropping out of school:

- (1) *Ecological characteristics*, such as neighborhood conditions or peer group effects.
- (2) *Unobserved psychological factors*, such as persistence, resilience, and optimism.
- (3) *Measures of the persistence of specific characteristics over time*; characteristics or factors that lead to dropping out may have a more *cumulative* effect; for example, performing poorly in school one year may lead to temporary disappointment and an increased resolve to do better. However, performing poorly in school for several years in a row may lead students to become detached from school and to believe that they are failures. Such beliefs eventually lead them to drop out – thus risk factors that measure student performance over several years may be better predictors of dropping out than those that measure performance over a single year.
- (4) *Transitory events* that occur closer to the time that students decide to drop out, for example, some students may drop out not because of the cumulative effects of poor academic performance but because of an unexpected event that severely affects them, such as having a child, being arrested, initiating drug use, or experiencing serious personal problems at home.

Gleason & Dynarski, 1998

Casting a wide net allows the DPC to consider the student in as broad a frame as possible, with as much contextual information as possible. Please refer to the section “*Predicting Who Will Drop Out*” which describes multiple student risk and protective factors of which to be aware as you cast your net.

Ultimately, we encourage you to explore the potential that DPCs have for creating an active student dropout prevention agenda within every Maine SAU. DPCs should not be viewed simply as “yet another mandate that must be met.” Rather, they should be viewed as an ideal opportunity to produce positive outcomes for many of Maine’s most needy and vulnerable children and adolescents.

IDENTIFYING STUDENTS AT RISK FOR DROPPING OUT

Which students are most likely to drop out of school and fail to graduate with a regular high school diploma? Understanding *why* students drop out of school is the key to addressing this problem. However, as stated by Russell Rumberger (2004), an internationally renowned researcher in the area of dropout prevention, “identifying the causes of dropping out is extremely difficult to do because, as with other forms of educational achievement (e.g., test scores), it is influenced by an array of proximal and distal factors related to both the individual student and to the family, school, and community settings in which the student lives.”

Reasons for Dropping Out of School

Which factors and conditions are linked to high dropout rates? Why do students leave school before they complete their high school education? Researchers have identified several factors and conditions that have commonly been associated with high student dropout rates. The most commonly cited factors and conditions identified are the following: *low family income level, being a member of certain racial/ethnic minority groups, limited English proficiency, living in a single-parent household, grade retention, academic problems and course failure, behavioral and disciplinary problems, teenage pregnancy, low educational levels of parents, high absenteeism and truancy, geographic location, family problems, high mobility, having a sibling or siblings who dropped out, substance abuse, and a lack of motivation for and/or a strong dislike for traditional schooling.*

As cited earlier in the *Guide*, several studies have attempted to identify specific reasons provided by students for their dropping out of school (e.g., “*I did not like school*” or “*I couldn’t get along with teachers*”). However, as cited by Rumberger (2004), these reasons do not reveal the underlying causes of why students drop out of school, especially those causes or factors from *earlier periods in their lives* that may have contributed to students’ attitudes, behaviors, and school performance immediately preceding their decision to leave school. In addition, as suggested by Rumberger, if many factors contribute to this phenomenon (dropping out) over a long period of time, it is virtually impossible to demonstrate a causal connection between any single factor and the decision to quit school.

Understanding why students drop out of school can be viewed from different conceptual frameworks. Some frameworks focus on the *individual* factors associated with dropping out (e.g., the values, attitudes, and behaviors of students or physical, mental, and cognitive factors). These factors usually are viewed as existing *within* the individual student. Other frameworks focus on the contextual factors found in student’s lives, their families, their schools, their communities, and their

peer groups. These factors often are referred to as *institutional* factors. Because the reasons why students drop out often are very complex, it is important to view the student dropout phenomenon from both perspectives: *individual* and *institutional*. On occasion, the reason why a student drops out of school can be attributed to a single specific factor; however, most often, the reasons why students leave school are complex, involving the interaction of multiple factors at both the individual and institutional levels.

Individual Factors

Several theories have been developed to understand the student dropout phenomenon and to predict which students are at highest risk for dropping out. These theories suggest that dropping out of school is but the final stage in a dynamic and cumulative process of disengagement or withdrawal. These theories propose that there are two dimensions to engagement: (1) *academic engagement* (engagement in learning) and (2) *social engagement* (engagement in the social dimensions of schooling). Thus, dropping out is not simply a result of academic failure or academic difficulties but frequently results from both social and academic problems in school (Rumberger, 2004).

“Dropping out is not simply a result of academic failure, but, rather often results from both social and academic problems in school.”

Russell Rumberger, 2004

Several *individual* predictors are associated with students dropping out of school. The most commonly cited individual predictors are presented below. In an effort to provide greater reader clarity, these indicators are presented without reference citations. However, interested readers will be able to obtain full citation documentation of these predictors on the Institute web site:

www.umaine.edu/issar/.

❖ *Poor Academic Achievement*

Course failure, inadequate academic performance (especially within the literacy domain), and the attainment of few course credits are regarded as very strong predictors for dropping out of school.

“When I was a kid, I used to love school. Things started to go bad in 7th grade and by the time I was a freshman in high school, I was flunking everything. It just never got better, so I dropped out as soon as I could.”

Roger, age 17 (recent dropout)

❖ *High Absenteeism/Truancy*

Students who miss a great deal of school, voluntarily or involuntarily, are more likely to leave school before graduating.

❖ *Behavioral or Disciplinary Problems*

Students who receive large numbers of disciplinary warnings, suspensions, or expulsions are more likely to drop out.

❖ *Student Mobility*

Both residential and school mobility increases the risk of dropping out of school.

“I remember when I was in elementary school. We were always moving to a different house and a different school. In the fifth grade, I went to three different schools because my mother had to keep changing jobs. I never was in one place long enough to make any friends or to learn anything.”

Amy, age 22 (dropped out in the 10th grade – tried to re-enter once but soon left; currently living with friends and working part-time for minimum wage)

❖ *Perceived “Lack of Connection or Belonging” or “Lack of Relevance”*

Many students drop out of school because they feel that they don’t really belong or they feel disconnected to their school culture, including its curriculum. Many student dropouts report experiencing feelings of rejection, alienation, and a lack of personal relationships with their teachers, administrators, other adults within the school, and often have few connections within their peer group.

“I was a ‘Goth’ in a school full of preppies and jocks. No one ever really understood me. Most of the kids, and even some of the teachers, thought I was weird. I wasn’t that weird, you know. But no one ever trusted me. I finally just left in the 11th grade. I don’t think anyone even noticed that I left.”

Mark, age 20 (never returned to school; unemployed)

❖ *Teenage Pregnancy/Parenting*

Being pregnant or having to assume parental responsibilities increases the likelihood that a student will leave school before graduating.

“I got pregnant when I was in 11th grade. I was 17 at the time. I was on the honor roll a couple of times in high school but I had to miss a lot of school because my baby was sick a lot and I couldn’t find anyone to take care of her. It just became too hard to stay in school. Maybe someday I’ll go back.”

Shelley, age 19 (out of school 2 years)

❖ *High School Employment*

Working more than 20 hours per week while attending high school has been shown to increase the likelihood of dropping out.

❖ *Student Background Characteristics*

Several demographic variables have been shown to influence students' likelihood of dropping out, including gender, race and ethnicity, immigration status, and language background. Males drop out at a higher rate than females; students who are members of racial/ethnic minority groups (especially Black, Hispanic, and Native American) drop out at significantly higher rates than White students; and students who are immigrants and/or have limited-English proficiency are more likely to leave school early.

❖ *Disabilities*

Students with disabilities historically have been shown to drop out of school at a higher rate than their non-disabled peers. *Special education students*, especially those students identified as having an *emotional/behavioral disability* drop out at a significantly higher rate than other students.

❖ *Low Educational and Occupational Aspirations*

Students who appear to possess low aspirations related to their academic achievement accomplishments and/or their future vocational opportunities tend to drop out of school at a higher rate than their peers who possess high aspirations.

❖ *Substance Abuse*

Excessive alcohol and drug use (often used to mask other problems such as depression or anxiety) have been shown to significantly increase the likelihood of dropping out of school.

"The booze and weed did me in. For a while I was OK. Then I started to miss more and more school and I finally dropped out in my sophomore year. I had so few credits that it would have taken me forever to graduate."

Erik, age 18

❖ *Mental Health Problems*

Students who experience significant mental health problems or difficulties, especially those individuals who do not receive interventions to help lessen the impact of these difficulties, are more likely to drop out. Also, students who may not have a substantial mental health disorder but who manifest behaviors suggestive of persistent "low self-esteem" tend to leave school before graduating.

“High school was a blur for me. I used to love school when I was younger. Then everything went downhill. I didn’t realize until much later that I was a depressed kid. I just couldn’t concentrate in school, and I just wanted to stay home and sleep.”

Ellen, age 19 (dropped out of school in 11th grade; currently unemployed and living with her mother)

❖ *Safety Issues*

Many students remain out of school for prolonged periods of time (with some of them eventually dropping out) because they feel harassed and “not safe” within their school environment. In particular, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students have been shown to be especially vulnerable to harassment. In some schools, students fear harassment by gang members, and they do not attend.

“When I was in sixth grade, it all started. The other guys started calling me ‘fag’ and ‘homo.’ I went to a small rural high school and it got worse. I got tired of being picked on all of the time – so I just stopped going to school.”

Philip, age 19 (dropped out in the 9th grade; never returned to school; currently living on the streets and engaging in prostitution to support his drug addiction)

❖ *Legal Issues*

Students who experience difficulties with legal authorities frequently drop out of school or, in many cases, are removed from school before they are able to graduate.

❖ *Retention*

Retention, even in the lower elementary grades, significantly increases the likelihood of dropping out of school. It has been widely reported that even one retention strongly increases the likelihood of a student dropping out by *four times*. More than one retention almost guarantees that a student will eventually drop out. The current standards-based, high academic achievement and high-stakes testing educational reform movement that discourages social promotion, and (as many researchers suggest) encourages student retention, arguably will have a major impact on the number of students who drop out of school.

“I hated it when I was held back in the 2nd grade. I felt so stupid. All of my friends moved on to the 3rd grade. I think that was the time that I first really started to hate school.”

Dana, age 17 (recently dropped out in 10th grade)

Institutional Factors

As Rumberger (2004) stated, “individual attitudes and behaviors are shaped by the institutional settings where people live” (p. 137) and “empirical research has identified a number of factors within students’ families, schools, and communities (and peers) that predict dropping out” (p. 138). The most commonly cited *institutional* predictors are presented below. In an effort to provide greater reader clarity, these indicators, for the most part, are presented without reference citations. However interested readers will be able to obtain full citation documentation of these predictors on the Institute web site: www.umaine.edu/issar/.

Family Factors

A student’s family background is widely recognized as the *single* most important contributor to success in school. A student’s background exerts a powerful, independent influence on both student achievement and student dropout rates.

- ❖ *Socioeconomic Status.* Most commonly measured by level of parental education and income, socioeconomic status is a very powerful predictor of a student’s school achievement and dropout behavior. Students from low-income families drop out at a significantly higher rate than their more affluent peers.

“In 2001, students living in low-income families (the lowest 20 percent of all family incomes) were six times more likely than their peers in high-income families (the top 20 percent of all family incomes) to drop out of school over the one-year period of October 2000 to 2001.”

NCES, 2004

- ❖ *Family Configuration.* Students from single-parent and step-families are more likely to drop out than students living in two-parent family households.
- ❖ *Parent-Student Relationships.* Strong relationships between students and their parents frequently mitigate the negative outcomes commonly associated with a family’s socioeconomic status and configuration. In other words, students who live in low socioeconomic and/or single-parent family situations are more likely to graduate from high school if a strong, consistent, positive relationship exists between the student and his/her parent(s).
- ❖ *Level of Parent Monitoring, Involvement, and Support.* Students whose parents closely monitor and regulate their activities, provide them with strong emotional support, and who are actively engaged in their school activities are less likely to drop out of school – even in those family situations that have been commonly linked to high dropout rates (e.g., low socioeconomic level).
- ❖ *Physical Health and Mental Health Issues.* The likelihood of dropping out of school is greatly increased for students who live with parents who have serious medical, mental health, and/or substance abuse problems. Sometimes these students drop out of school to assume a primary caretaker role. More often, however, these students find it difficult to remain engaged in school because of high stress related

to their parent's condition and eventually this stress has a cumulative adverse effect upon them, and they simply withdraw from school.

- ❖ *Inadequate or No Permanent Housing.* Students who live in inadequate housing situations that are often overcrowded and lack basic necessities (e.g., heat) and especially those students who have no permanent shelter at all, those students who are "officially" or "unofficially" homeless, are at much higher risk for dropping out of school.

School Factors

Schools exert powerful influences on student achievement, including dropout rates. However, as stated by Rumberger (2004) "demonstrating the influence of schools and identifying the specific school factors that affect student achievement present some methodological challenges. The biggest challenge is disentangling the effects of student and family background from the effects of school factors" (p. 140).

School policies and practices frequently contribute to the reasons why many students drop out of school. A wide variety of school-related factors contribute to the dropout problem including (1) school policies and procedures; (2) school structure and class assignment; (3) class and program assignment; (4) course content and instruction; and (5) school climate and relationships. These factors have been well-documented in the literature. For example, Sue Shannon and Pete Byslma provide an excellent comprehensive summary of these factors in their report, *Helping Students Finish School: Why Students Drop Out and How To Help Them Graduate*, (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympia, Washington, December, 2003).

Following is a selected list of school-related factors that have been commonly associated with students dropping out of school. In most cases, these factors are presented below without specific citations. However, interested readers will be able to obtain full citation documentation of these factors and dropout predictors on the Institute web site:

www.umaine.edu/issar/.

(1) *School Policies and Procedures*

School regulations and actions taken by school administrators often contribute to the reasons why students drop out of school. Students considered to be "problems" or "malcontents" often are discharged from school. Many of these "misbehaving students" receive suspensions or expulsions that eventually lead to their leaving school, voluntarily or involuntarily.

Discipline and attendance policies have been shown to contribute to the reasons why some students leave school before they graduate. Although arguably well intentioned, zero tolerance disciplinary policies along with suspensions and expulsions for poor attendance, truancy, or disciplinary infractions, often result in students being *pushed-out* of school or more subtly, not encouraged to remain in school.

"Students *drop out* of school; schools *discharge* students."

Carolyn Riehl, 1999

Suspensions for poor attendance, tardiness, and truancy often result in some students believing that they not only are not welcome in school but also that they do not belong in school. The longer that these students are out of school, time and opportunities to learn are lost. Typically, these students fall further behind academically and lose credits and for many, they develop the attitude, “I will never be able to catch up anyway, so why bother to return to school?”

High stakes testing, stringent grading practices, and tougher policies to end social promotion (as required in *No Child Left Behind*) are viewed by many educators and researchers as contributing to higher student dropout rates. Although research studies conducted on the impact of high-stakes testing on student dropout rates have not yet established a direct causal relationship between high stakes testing required for graduation and dropouts, the results of several recent studies suggest that states which have the most severe consequences attached to high-stakes testing, including exit exams, have more dropouts than do states that have low or moderate consequences attached to testing.

Retention in grade, as previously mentioned, is a powerful predictor of students dropping out of school. Some researchers conclude that retention constitutes the *single most powerful predictor* for dropping out of school.

Some researchers have concluded that retention constitutes the *single most powerful predictor* for dropping out of school.

(2) *School Structure and Class Assignment*

School size and the organizational structure of schools are associated with the reasons why some students drop out. Many students find it difficult to “fit in” in large, impersonal high schools. For these students, the smaller the school, the greater the likelihood that they will be able to establish more personal relationships with their teachers and receive more individualized, personal attention that may help them remain in school.

Transitions from elementary school to middle school, and especially from middle school into high school, have been shown to contribute to high levels of stress and frustration for many students and in some cases, contribute to their dropping out. This also has been demonstrated to be true for students who *transfer* schools.

Pay particular attention to transitions.

In particular, *ninth grade* has been identified as the most critical year with respect to the overall student dropout problem. Many students often experience a great deal of difficulty negotiating the ninth grade successfully. Ninth grade course failure is a powerful predictor for students eventually dropping out of school.

Ninth grade course failure is a powerful predictor for students eventually dropping out of school.

(3) *Class and Program Assignment*

The programs into which students are placed, as well as the quality of services that they receive in school, have been linked to dropping out. Students who are *tracked* according to ability level (low ability level) and/or who are placed in remedial, compensatory, or special education programs generally have higher dropout rates than other students.

It has been suggested that some students who are involved in these programs may feel stigmatized and choose to leave school early. Other students may *age-out*. Conversely, some argue that the reason why some students leave school before graduating is that they were never “identified” as eligible for receiving these special programs and services, and if they had been, these students would have benefited from the special instruction that they required and remained in school.

Stereotyping students of color and those living in poverty are also related to class assignment and tracking. Frequently these students are over-represented in general, vocational, remedial, and special education classes and under-enrolled in advanced placement or enrichment programs.

(4) *Course Content and Instruction*

Classroom routines, expectations, and course content also contribute to students’ engagement or disengagement with school and are commonly linked to the reasons why students leave school early. For example, non-challenging courses, pull-out programs, a fragmented curriculum, low-level expectations, unchallenging busywork, and excessive repetition are examples of ineffective practices that have been associated with the reasons why students drop out of school.

“I could have graduated, you know...I was smart enough but I just got too bored and I quit.”
Jason (10th grade dropout)

A superficial and poor quality curriculum also contributes to students dropping out of school. For *at-risk students* to remain in school, they need to be exposed to a relevant, authentic, and challenging curriculum.

(5) *School Climate and Relationships*

School climate has been identified as a major factor in determining whether or not many students choose to remain in school or to drop out. School climate, in large part, refers to the *personal relationships* that students experience with each other and with adults within their school environments. It refers to the *connections* that students are able to make that allow them to feel *part of the school-community*. It refers to developing a greater sense of *belonging, mutual respect, and empowerment*.

"I never liked school since the start but I made it through OK pretty much. But high school really sucked. Unless you're a jock, you were nobody – so I quit."

John, age 17 (recent dropout)

Interviews with student dropouts often reflect the *perception* that schools are viewed as alien places where teachers do not care about their students or try to help them learn. Many students drop out of school because they do not feel *personally connected* to any significant adult within the school setting and they really do not feel welcomed or valued or that they would be missed if they left. The presence of personal relationships among students and adults in schools is an extremely important factor in preventing students from dropping out.

Many students drop out of school because they do not feel *personally connected* to any significant adult within the school setting and they really do not feel welcomed or valued or that they would be missed if they left.

Community and Peer Factors

Communities and peer groups can influence students' withdrawal from school. Some of the most common factors that have been associated with student dropout rates are summarized below.

- (1) Having friends or siblings who have dropped out increases the likelihood of dropping out of school. Conversely, having high-achieving friends or siblings has been shown to decrease the likelihood of dropping out.
- (2) Living in communities that have high crime rates, large gang membership, poor quality or inadequate housing, and/or a lack of adequate social support and recreational services has been shown to increase the likelihood of dropping out of school.
- (3) The economic conditions and the employment opportunities available to students both during and after school have been shown to influence student dropout rates. High neighborhood unemployment rates tend to increase the likelihood that students will drop out, while more favorable economic benefits of graduating (e.g., higher salaries of high school graduates compared to dropouts), tend to correspond with lower dropout rates.

TYPOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO PREDICTING DROPOUTS

Some researchers have studied the dropout phenomenon from a typological approach. Kronick and Hargis (1990) suggested a typology of dropouts that integrates personal characteristics, school experience, and the timing of school disengagement. They distinguished higher achieving students from lower achievers. High-Achiever Pushouts have good grades but are expelled from school because of problem behaviors. Dropouts, however, are more likely to come from the low-achieving group. Within this category (low achievers) Kronick and Harris suggested three types of dropouts: *Low-Achiever Pushouts* (students who react to the frustration of repeated school failures with aggressiveness and rebellion, with their misbehaviors resulting in disciplinary sanctions, and eventually the students are expelled from school), *Quiet Dropouts* (students who also have a history of academic failure but who do not react with frustration and anger or manifest externalized behavior problems, they go unnoticed until they drop out); and *In-School Dropouts* (students who reach the 12th grade but fail the final exams because of serious deficiencies in their knowledge) (cited in Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, & Tremblay, 2000, p. 172).

Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (2000) in their study which relied on secondary analyses of two longitudinal samples of high school students developed a somewhat different approach for classifying “types of dropouts.” These researchers argued that students who drop out of school could be divided into four types: *Quiet Dropouts*, *Disengaged Dropouts*, *Low-Achiever Dropouts*, and *Maladjusted Dropouts* and that dropout prevention efforts, in order to be effective, need to take into consideration the differences that exist among the four types of students.

Janosz et al., (2000) operationally characterized each of the four dropout types as follows:

- (1) *Quiet Dropouts*: students who show (a) no evidence of school misbehavior and (b) moderate or high levels of commitment to education in general. Their academic performance tended to be lower than that of graduates and Disengaged dropouts, although higher than that of Low Achievers and maladjusted dropouts. They appeared to be involved in school activities, did not experience disciplinary sanctions, and held positive views about school attendance. These students typically do not react openly to their difficulties in school, do not misbehave, and generally go unnoticed until they choose to leave school. They look similar to the average graduates except for their academic achievement.
- (2) *Disengaged Dropouts*: students who show (a) an average-low level of school misbehavior, (b) low commitment to school, and (c) average performance with respect to grades. They do not like school, have few educational aspirations, care little about school grades, and feel that they are less competent than other students. They appear to place little value on the importance of education. Their school performance is superior to Maladjusted dropouts and Low Achievers. They do not misbehave as much as the Maladjusted dropouts do, but they are more troublesome than the Quiets and receive more disciplinary sanctions. Despite their disengagement from school and low school involvement, they do fairly well academically.
- (3) *Low-Achiever Dropouts*: students who show (a) weak commitment to education, (b) average-low levels of school misbehavior and, unlike the Disengaged dropouts, and (c) very poor school performance. They are distinct in their inability to fulfill the minimal requirements needed to pass their courses. Their difficulties clearly appear to center on academic deficiencies.
- (4) *Maladjusted Dropouts*: students who show (a) poor school performance and (b) weak commitment to education. They have difficulties at all academic, behavioral, and motivational levels. What really sets them apart from all other groups is their inappropriate behavior. They tend to invest little in school life and generally receive numerous disciplinary sanctions (Janosz et. al, 2000, pp. 176-178).

Janosz et al., (2000) concluded from their study that dropouts can be distinguished from one another with respect to the intensity and nature of their school difficulties. Two groups show clearly different profiles. At one extreme are dropouts (the *Quiets*) who, other than having low grades, resemble most future graduates. Their school experience is the least negative. At the other extreme is a group of dropouts (the *Maladjusted*) with severe behavioral and academic difficulties. These two groups make up the majority of the dropout population.

When Do Students Drop Out?

Students drop out of school at different times during their school careers and for different reasons. The *timing of dropping out* can be characterized in several ways including (1) the grade

when they dropped out; (2) the *number of credits earned* toward graduation when they dropped out; and (3) the *length of time* (number of years) the students had been in school before dropping out. Depending upon the measure employed to identify the timing of dropping out, different conclusions can be drawn. Results of several national studies suggest that the incidence of dropping out increases across the high school grades, with sophomores more likely to be at risk of dropping out than freshman, juniors more at risk than sophomores, and seniors more at risk than juniors.

However, results from more recent studies suggest that the *ninth grade* is the most common grade for dropping out. Several of these studies have shown that there has been a *bulge in ninth grade school enrollments* and further that the *attrition rate between ninth grade and tenth grade has tripled during the past thirty years*. Students tend to *disappear* between the ninth and tenth grades. Observers have speculated that since the passage of *No Child Left Behind*, school administrators in some states are encouraging that low-performing students be retained (e.g., in the ninth grade) to avoid having their achievement scores included with the scores of other students as part of tenth-grade high-stakes testing policies that exist within their schools.

It has been suggested that a more reliable and meaningful predictor of the timing of dropping out may be the *number of credits earned* toward graduation along with the number of years a student has been in school and not the actual grade identification. Irrespective of whichever measure is used to document the timing of students dropping out of school, results of recent research strongly suggest that the *ninth grade* (or the grade when students first enter high school) represents a huge stumbling block for many students. Many students who eventually dropped out of school were shown to have earned few credits during their ninth grade year. Several studies have shown that *ninth grade course failure* is a substantial predictor of dropping out, even after controlling for many demographic, attitudinal, and achievement factors prior to high school.

Interested readers may obtain full documentation for the findings contained in this section by referring to the Institute web site: www.umaine.edu/issar/.

Differences Between Early and Late Dropouts

Are the risk factors different for students who drop out early (middle school) than for students who drop out late (high school)? Goldschmidt and Wang (1999) investigated this question in their study which utilized the *National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS)* database as their data source. The results of this study suggested that the mix of risk factors changes between early and late dropouts. Being *retained* was found to be the single strongest predictor of

dropping out; its effect was consistent for both early and late dropouts, but much stronger for early dropouts. For late dropouts, *misbehavior* was found to be the most important factor.

Roderick (1994, as cited in Shannon & Byslma, 2003) emphasizes the importance of transition periods to students' experiences in school, particularly middle to high school. She distinguishes between *early-grade dropouts* (students who leave school between the seventh and ninth grade or during the ninth grade) and *late-grade dropouts* (students who leave school in grades 10-12). Early-grade dropouts often have experienced poor grades and perhaps retention as early as fourth grade. For these students, their performance worsens quite rapidly through middle school. Late-grade dropouts and graduates, on the other hand, did not differ in trends in their average grades during middle school. However, for all dropouts, school performance dropped dramatically following their transition to high school.

PREDICTING WHO WILL DROP OUT

Traditionally risk factor lists or scales have been widely used to identify those students who appear to be at the highest risk for dropping out of school, and subsequently to target these students with dropout prevention programs or strategies. However, results of recent research studies show that *risk factor lists used alone* are not reliable measures to predict which students will drop out because they frequently target the *wrong students*. Many risk factor lists either (1) *over-identify* students for interventions who don't necessarily need them, or (2) *under-identify* students who would benefit from interventions but who do not receive them because they failed to meet the *screening criteria* established by the specific risk indicator list employed.

It is recognized, nevertheless, that members of many Dropout Prevention Committees in Maine are looking for guidance with respect to developing and implementing a *general model* (basic strategies and procedures) for predicting which of their students may be at highest risk for dropping out of school. Therefore, the following information is offered for their consideration. Before developing and implementing any student dropout predictor model, however, it is strongly suggested that school personnel review the information contained in an earlier section of this *Guide*, "*Identifying Students At Risk for Dropping Out*." It is critical to understand the complex, multifaceted problems and issues that are involved in the student dropout problem. Clearly, *no one size fits all* model exists.

First, a comprehensive model, the *Students At-Risk Status (SARS)* model will be presented. This model, developed by The Institute for the Study of Students At Risk, provides a general framework of student *risk* and *protective* factors that are commonly used to assess a student's likelihood of dropping out of school. In brief, known or assumed *risk* factors for a student are identified within each of five categories: *individual* (personal), *family*, *school*, *peers*, and *community*. The total number of *risk* factors then is added to yield a *total risk score*. The same is done regarding *protective* factors. The total number of *protective* factors then is added to yield a *total protective score*. Finally, the total protective score is subtracted from the total risk score to yield a *dropout predictor index score*. For example, let's assume that a student is identified as having 50 risk factors and 20 protective factors. He/she would be assigned a *dropout predictor index score* of 30. The higher the score, the greater likelihood of dropping out. The DPC would need to establish a range of index scores and assign them respective *risk values*. For example, 0-10 = *no* or *minimal risk*; 11-20 = *moderate risk*; 21-29 = *high risk*; 30 or higher = *very high risk*, etc. The SARS instrument is presented in *Appendix F*.

It is recognized that, although possibly useful in some respects, this comprehensive model may be too cumbersome and too labor-intensive to be used in many Maine schools. Also, the *SARS*

model is acknowledged to have some limitations. For example, some individual factors (both *risk* and *protective*) arguably could be viewed as having much greater weight than others; yet, they are assigned the same point value. Likewise, several of the factors are listed in more than one category, thus allowing for possibly misleading and unreliable *scores*. Nevertheless, the major reason that this model is included in the *MDPG* is to provide DPC members with a comprehensive list of factors and conditions within several key categories that the research literature has identified as influencing student dropout behavior. These factors should be considered when attempting to predict a student's likelihood for dropping out even though they may not be employed as part of the locally developed dropout predictor model per se. Also, the *protective* factors listed are suggested to be of value with respect to a school's efforts to identify and make efforts to nurture specific qualities and attributes that have been shown to influence students "staying in school."

Second, a more simplified student dropout predictor model will be presented, the *Dropout Predictor Scale (DPS)*. The *DPS* should be viewed as a basic *screening tool*. It should be employed with all of the same cautions that will be addressed regarding the more comprehensive dropout predictor model, the *SARS*. When employing any student dropout predictor model, it is extremely important to keep in mind one essential caution: *dropout predictor models that utilize "risk factors" alone have been shown to be largely ineffective with respect to predicting which students will likely drop out of school.*

...dropout predictor models that utilize "risk factors" alone have been shown to be largely ineffective with respect to predicting which students will likely drop out of school.

This is especially true when these models are used at the 9-12 grade levels. For many students, the reality is that "high school may be too late." Student disengagement may have been taken place for too long a period of time. The cumulative effects of negative factors and conditions simply may be too much to overcome. Clearly, *strong prevention and early intervention programs are the most effective strategies to prevent students from eventually dropping out.* See *Appendix G* for complete *DPS* instrument.

Finally, a third student assessment instrument is presented, the *Student Risk/Asset Rubric for Assessing Dropout Potential (SRAR)*. This instrument, which is presented in *Appendix H*, was developed by George S. Smith, Ph.D. as part of a federal grant from the Office of Special Education (OSEP) to the Maine Department of Education (Award #H326X040004).

This particular instrument is one of three dropout prevention tools developed by Dr. Smith and his colleagues as part of the federal grant cited above. The other two instruments are the *School Dropout Prevention Program Self-Assessment Rubric* and the *District Dropout Prevention Program*

Self-Assessment Rubric. Each of these instruments is currently being field tested and is presented in *Appendix H*.

Dropout committee members need to ensure that whatever model they choose to adopt reflects *local* needs, demographics, conditions, and resources (involving student, school, family, peer, and community factors). The suggested models (*SARS*, *DPS*, and the *SRAR*) are offered as a *starting point* in an effort to address the need to identify those students who *appear* to be at highest risk for dropping out of school and to develop appropriate strategies, programs, and interventions to help keep these students in school and on track for a regular high school diploma. One other caution. Irrespective of whichever model ultimately may be developed and implemented, *the instincts and judgments of professional educators at the local school level (especially those teachers and counselors who know students the best) should be given major consideration in the at-risk student identification process*.

SARS: A Suggested Model for Determining a Student's At-Risk Status

A review of recent and current literature suggests that the determination of a student's risk status is a complex, multi-stage process that involves several components, factors, and conditions. The following risk determination model (*SARS*) represents an effort to present a schemata and a process for determining which students might be considered at risk and, therefore, require primary, secondary, or tertiary prevention interventions. The model, which is grounded in recent risk research and prevention research activities, is designed to provide a context in which to better understand how a student's individual assets and deficits interact with positive and negative factors or conditions in his/her family, school, peer group, and community to either (1) *increase* risk likelihood or (2) *decrease* risk likelihood (*Appendix E*, Figure 1).

"Children are vulnerable (placed at risk) because of a chain of interactions involving their own attributes and the attributes of their families, schools, and communities."

Richard Weissbourd, 1996

Students may be placed at risk for dropping out of school primarily because of their own attributes (e.g., chronic substance abuse) but, more often, they are placed at risk because of an interaction of their own negative attributes with the negative attributes that exist in their family, peer, school, and community environments (e.g., living with parents who are chronically depressed or stressed, being the recipient of persistent bullying or harassment by peers, having severe academic and/or behavior problems at school, and living in a community in which violence is common).

A student's *risk status* can be determined by assessing the quantity and quality of both *risk* (deficit) indicators or factors and *protective* (asset) indicators that are present in his/her life. The greater the numbers of risk factors that are present (within the student or in interaction with negative factors in his/her family, peer group, school, and community) the *increased* likelihood that the student is at risk. Conversely, the greater number of protective factors that the student has or that exist in his/her interactions with family, peers, school, and community, the *decreased* likelihood that the student is at risk.

Lists of common risk factors (indicators) and protective factors (indicators) are contained in Figures 2-6 (*Appendix F*). Clearly, these lists represent only samples of both positive and negative indicators. Numerous other indicators, both positive and negative, could be included. However, the factors listed in Figures 2-6 represent some of the most common factors that are cited in the relevant research literature, and they are included to provide a general overview of major influences, both positive and negative, that theoretically determine an individual's approximate risk status.

In brief, a student's *risk status* may be determined by considering the quantity and quality of his/her own positive and negative attributes along with the quantity and quality of the positive and negative attributes in the child's family, peer group, school, and community (Figure 7, *Appendix F*).



Cautions: Using the SARS Model

In interpreting the material contained in Figures 2-7 (*Appendix F*), several cautions are strongly suggested.

- ✓ The number of protective and risk factors present in a student's life should be viewed as having an additive effect. These factors usually exist in clusters, not in isolation. Children who are abused or neglected, for example, often live in poor, single-parent households, in disadvantaged neighborhoods beset with violence, drug use, and crime. Multiple risk factors have independent, additive effects.
- ✓ At times, the presence of a *single risk factor* in a student's life, if it is sufficiently severe and chronic, can have overwhelming, devastating effects, placing that student at very high risk for dropping out of school. For example, a thirteen year old student may be very intelligent, live in a very supportive family situation and in a safe neighborhood, has a record of solid academic achievement during his elementary school years, but he, for the past six months, has severely abused alcohol and drugs. Despite the several protective factors that are present, the severity of this student's one risk factor is so great that it serves to place him at very high risk for present and future difficulty.

On the other hand, another thirteen year-old student may possess only low average intelligence, live in a very stressed family situation and in a community that is routinely plagued by violence. However, this student has been successful in developing a consistent, longstanding positive relationship with a supportive, caring adult in his life. This relationship might be sufficient to enable this student to overcome obstacles that, on the surface, appear insurmountable.

- ✓ It is important to view and interpret *risk* from a *developmental* perspective. Students are placed at risk for different reasons at different times in their lives. For example, the positive or negative influences of peer relationships in placing a student at risk may not be especially important for very young, preschool children but they clearly can be major factors during the middle school years. Similarly, the consistent, daily interactions (either positive or negative) that a preschool child has with his mother may place that child at very high risk for a wide variety of emotional, behavioral, and social problems. However, the impact of these interactions on that child's risk status may lessen considerably as he/she is in middle school or high school when peer influences typically constitute a more important factor for determining likely risk status.
- ✓ It is important to recognize that some *risk* is temporary and situational in nature. Some students may be at very high risk for brief periods of time due to personal factors or behaviors and/or because of their negative interactions with certain environments. For example, an eleventh grade student who has no previous history of "risk factors" might begin to use drugs on a regular basis. As a result, he starts to miss a great deal of school. However, this student then ceases to use drugs and attends school regularly. Clearly, this student, for the time period that he was using drugs heavily and missing a great deal of school could, and arguably should, be viewed as being at high risk. For other students, their negative behaviors are more chronic and persistent. They have been at risk for a prolonged period of time.
- ✓ In employing sets of *risk indicators* or *protective indicators* to predict *at-risk status* it is important to understand that these sets hold much more predictive value (they are much more valid and reliable) for *groups* of individuals that possess some common trait or characteristic (e.g., living in a single-parent family) than for individuals within that group. Thus, while it may be true that living in a female-headed single parent household has been shown to increase the likelihood of children being at risk for difficulty or failure in school, one must be cautious about making this prediction for an individual child who lives in this family arrangement. We cannot assume, or predict, that this child is at risk *simply* because he or she lives in a female-headed, single parent household. On the other hand, it is also true that we cannot assume that a child who lives in a two-parent household is not at risk.

The Dropout Predictor Scale (DPS)

Multiple factors and conditions are associated with dropping out of school. These *risk factors* have been viewed as increasing the likelihood that students will leave school before graduating from high school. A comprehensive review of the relevant literature with respect to student dropout risk factors identified over 60 factors that have been suggested as predicting student dropouts. Of these risk factors *15 specific factors* were identified as representing the *most*

common and/or the *most critical* factors for predicting the likelihood that students will drop out. Because some factors are considered to be more common and/or more critical than others regarding their dropout predictive value, they have been assigned a higher value than others in the *DPS* (e.g., academic difficulties and behavioral/disciplinary problems).

In addition to the 15 specific *risk factors*, several broader major demographic *risk factors* have been widely reported to influence a student's likelihood for dropping out of school. These are (1) low SES; (2) family factors (living in a single-parent household, level of educational attainment of parents; significant mental health and substance abuse issues, etc.); (3) racial/ethnic minority status (especially African American, Native American, and Hispanic); and (4) limited-English proficiency. It is suggested that these factors should be viewed as potential "red flags" and that they should be considered as *broad-based indicators* with respect to increasing the likelihood of a student's dropping out of school.

The entire *DPS* is contained in *Appendix G*. *The authors of the MDPG wish to emphasize that the DPS is a "work in progress." Currently, it is being field tested within several Maine school systems. At this point in time, it should not be viewed as an empirically-based instrument. The DPS will be modified subsequent to further research with respect to its validity and reliability properties. The final version of the DPS will be available on the Institute's web site. The DPS is presented in this Guide strictly as a "general model" that may be useful to readers.*

Important Factors and Issues To Consider

Following are *consensus* findings contained in the research literature with respect to "predicting which students are at highest risk for dropping out." In using the *SARS*, *DPS*, *SRAR*, or any other student dropout predictor model, it is important to consider these factors and issues.

- ✓ Students at risk of dropping out of school are not a homogeneous group. They represent a wide range of children and youth with very diverse attributes, behaviors, values, and needs. Remember that not all students who drop out fit typical *student dropout profiles*.
- ✓ Sets of risk indicators can be useful, but they also can be dangerous. They can serve either to unnecessarily label a child based upon the *assumption* that a child will experience difficulty because of a risk indicator or set of indicators (over-identification), or they can fail to identify a child who would benefit from interventions but who does not receive them because he or she "fails to meet the established criteria" for the set of indicators (under-identification).
- ✓ Some children and adolescents demonstrate a high level of resilience. They develop well, or even excel, in situations that for most others generally produce negative outcomes.

- ✓ Factors affect students differentially. Situations that affect one student's decision to drop out of school may have little effect on another student's decision. *Students drop out for different reasons at different times.* An intersection of specific causal factors may place some students at risk of dropping out early (elementary or middle school), while other students find that they are in trouble at a much later stage (11th or 12th grade).
- ✓ Early intervention and prevention-type programs generally are much more effective than remedial programs. However, in order for prevention programs to be effective, they must address risk factors that appear at a *student's particular stage of development.* For example, violence prevention programs for young children typically will not be effective for adolescents.
- ✓ Dropping out is not simply a result of academic problems or academic failure, but often results from *both* academic and social failure at school. Clearly, chronic academic difficulties, especially within the literacy domain, have been shown to be a strong predictor for dropping out. However, it is essential that students who manifest social problems not be overlooked. Student *disengagement* (both with respect to learning *and* the social aspects of the school culture) often is a strong predictor for dropping out.
- ✓ Pay particular attention to *transitional periods* especially the transition from middle school to high school. The problems relating to dropping out appear in their most acute form in the 9th grade.
- ✓ In many cases, students who enter high school from smaller *sending towns* have been shown to be at higher risk for eventually dropping out. Some of these students experience difficulty making a successful transition and social adjustment to the larger high school culture. Obviously, many of these students make excellent adjustments (both academically and socially). However, it is important to *pay close attention* to these students regarding their risk potential for dropping out.
- ✓ Retention in grade, even once at the early elementary level, is a powerful predictor for dropping out of school. Students who have been retained more than once have been shown to be at extremely high risk for dropping out. *Retention* should be a real "red flag" indicator in any dropout predictor model.
- ✓ The act of "dropping out" often represents the final stage of a long, cumulative process with "signs" present very early in a student's schooling careers. This suggests that dropout predictor models must have two essential components: (1) they should allow for the analysis of student information "over time" and (2) they should be implemented early. Most models are developed and implemented at the high school level. This timing is too late for many students. Too much damage already may have been done, and too many students never "recover" from negative academic, behavioral, and social problems experienced earlier in their school careers.
- ✓ Most dropout predictor models are not designed to identify those students who do not typically present a profile of long-term negative academic, behavioral and/or social behavioral patterns. Although less common, some students drop out of school because of *situational* factors that are related to an especially traumatic

incident in their lives (e.g., the termination of a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend, the unexpected death of a loved one, a sudden change in family structure or family dynamics). These students, many of whom may not have presented a prior history of being at risk become “emotionally overwhelmed” and leave school. Most dropout predictor models would not “pick up” these students. Thus, it is important that the opportunity exists for school personnel to identify these students for possible interventions even though they may not be identified via the specific model employed.

- ✓ Frequent student mobility (both residential and school) is a major predictor for dropping out. Clearly, most students have no control over this situation. And, certainly some students who have been extremely mobile during their school careers are among the most academically proficient and socially well-adjusted within their schools. However, particular attention should be paid to those students who have a record of excessive mobility (e.g., changing schools and/or residences more than once during the school year).

- ✓ High absenteeism and/or truancy is a strong predictor for dropping out of school. School personnel need to pay particular attention to sudden, unexplained increases in student absenteeism. This withdrawal behavior may be suggestive of serious difficulties being experienced by students (e.g., harassment, substance abuse, mental health problems, etc.).

CONDUCTING A LOCAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

Why do a self-assessment? Program self-assessment is an excellent method to obtain an objective look at the dropout situation in your school or district as well as to begin thinking about how you might implement effective dropout prevention strategies. “High school dropout” can be an emotional issue and the dropout problem frequently may be perceived of as *massive, untouchable, and/or unsolvable*. The benefit of a self-assessment is that it can help you look at the situation objectively and allow all interested parties to provide feedback and suggestions in order to arrive at a real sense of the problem and how to solve it. The local assessment process can be categorized into two steps: (1) *understanding* your current situation, which includes collecting data from students and staff; and (2) *following through and following up*, which apply to program and intervention implementation, as well as data collection, to determine if your interventions made a difference.

Understanding Your Current Situation

An important first step in conducting a self-assessment is to have a clear picture of the dropout situation in your district. This step may be more complicated than it initially appears. Yes, you may already know that you have a 15 percent dropout rate between the 8th and 9th grades, or a large number of students who drop out midway through 11th grade. However, do you have a good understanding of why this is the case? Are there some underlying reasons why these are critical time periods for the students in your district? Are some schools more impacted than others?

It is recommended that the *academic trajectory* of every student, but specifically those students identified as being of concern, be monitored every quarter at the individual school level. This method will allow for developing and implementing interventions and student supports *before* many students begin to feel overwhelmed and believe that they have no choice but to drop out. The DPC can create a plan of action for schools so that they can provide data involving their students. The DPC then can compile the data for the district. The driving force behind this initial data collection is to *generate useful information to better understand why students drop out*.

Identifying Patterns in the Dropout Process

There are a number of variables schools and DPCs should begin to track immediately, particularly for students who seem likely candidates for dropping out. *Tracking students before a problem occurs* is important. For example, if, after a well-established baseline of above average

performance, a student's grades suddenly slump, this may indicate the student is in need of intervention. Below we suggest a number of aspects of the student's school life that should be carefully observed. This section is primarily geared toward the high school level, although the ideas contained herein are applicable to any grade level.

❖ *Transitions*

Research indicates that 9th grade is the most critical time related to dropping out of school. This is true for several reasons. When students transition from grade to grade, particularly from middle to high school, or when the change involves moving to a new building, this simple transition may cause sufficient disorientation to *push* a student to drop out. Often students who are "on the fence" in terms of their commitment to school may leave at the first opportunity if they perceive that they do not belong in the *new place*. Note that transitions also include students transferring from other schools or reintegrating from correctional or rehabilitation facilities. Students also can be dramatically affected by changes in their lives outside of school such as instability in the neighborhood, death and divorce of friends or family, or changes in romantic relationships.

❖ *Year in School*

The suggestion that 9th grade is the year to target for prevention (or intervention) is not simply because this particular year often represents a transition year. For many students who attend schools with strong retention policies, 9th grade becomes "the year the student never leaves." The problem becomes one of repetition of a grade without any intervention to assist the student beyond exposing him or her to the same material as the previous year. It is helpful to think about this idea in the context of three variables: (a) *grade in school*, (b) *chronological age*, and (c) *year in high school*.

For many students who attend schools with strong retention policies, 9th grade becomes "the year the student never leaves."

For example, if a student enters (a) grade 9 at the (b) age of 14, he is in (c) year *one* of high school. If that student is then retained twice, the situation becomes one where he is (a) in grade 9, (b) 16 years old and (c) in year *three* of high school. As soon as the student reaches the age of 17, he is legally able to drop out and often does so. However, for record keeping purposes, he was a 9th grader.

It is easy to understand how this situation can become problematic for record keeping and data reporting. If the only data available report that most students drop out of high school after grade 9, something may be missing. However, if we learn that most students who drop out may be in 9th grade, but in their third *year* of high school, the picture becomes more troubling and the need for prevention (or intervention) more urgent. Thus, when collecting data on your school, we advise recording (a) *grade at dropout*, (b) *age at dropout*, and (c) *number of years in high school at the time of dropout*.

❖ *Academic Performance and Credits Earned*

Academic Performance - Student performance in classes (grades), on achievement tests, their MEA scores, and their performance on LAS measures clearly are necessary to examine, as research indicates that schools may have in place academic performance measuring

systems that actually push students toward dropping out. Does your school have academic policies and practices that, although arguably well-intentioned, in reality tend to push students toward withdrawal from school? Low academic performance also may be a reason students disengage from school; they perceive themselves as performing poorly, and they pull themselves out. Irrespective of how academic disengagement occurs, these data are important to monitor and to track in order to understand the *true extent* of your school's dropout problem.

Credits Earned - For data collection purposes, tracking a student's number of credits earned can be very informative. If the typical 12th grader at your school is expected to earn 22 credits in order to graduate, but by the end of 11th grade the student has only earned 10 credits, some questions need to be answered, and the possibility of this student dropping out be given consideration. Furthermore, if the data from your school indicate that the dropouts consistently earn fewer credits than they are expected to per academic year, this information can direct your intervention strategies.

"We put great pressure on our schools to raise test scores
and very little to ensure that students graduate."

Gary Orfield, 2004

❖ *Attendance*

As with academic performance, schools often have expectations for attendance that, if not met, can lead to suspension from school. Excessive absences also represent a strong indicator that a student is not engaged in the educational process. Both the *reasons for* and the *number of* absences per semester or trimester are important data to collect in an effort to understand the patterns of students who drop out.

❖ *Number of Discipline Referrals*

Similar to attendance tracking, knowing the number of discipline referrals a student has accumulated is very important. Students who receive frequent disciplinary actions, especially those who have received large numbers of suspensions or expulsions, are at much higher risk for dropping out of school. This may or may not be a significant characteristic of your district's dropouts. If it is, it can be addressed in a preventative manner. If it is not, student discipline can be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, or through the school's regular disciplinary policies. It may not need to be a component of the dropout prevention plan per se.

❖ *Previous Grade Retentions*

One of the major reasons why your students may be experiencing difficulty upon entering your school is because they have a history of school failure. Any information you can glean regarding past school performance and/or grade retentions can be useful. Students who have been retained are far more likely to drop out of high school. For example, a student entering high school at the age of 15, due to being held back in 3rd and 7th grades, may *enter* high school planning to drop out as soon as she turns 17. Being a full year (or two) older than her cohort of 9th graders may create additional stress during her transition.

If the DPC has a solid sense of who is entering school each year, prevention strategies can be designed to reflect the needs of these students. Interventions should be in place as early as possible so that students feel supported and have access to academic or personal assistance they need to increase the likelihood of success in school.

❖ *Risk and Protective Factors*

As discussed previously in the *MDPG*, a number of factors can interact to increase risk and also to protect a student from dropping out of school. Tracking characteristics of students' lives will be useful in understanding the local dropout picture. For example, knowing when a student gets pregnant or if a student goes to a youth correctional facility can be red flags for the DPC to consider in intervention planning that will aid their work with the schools in supporting the students to help them graduate on time. Examples of protective factors include close family support and good relationships with the school counselor or a specific teacher.

How To Track Dropout Patterns

Examine the past. To gain an understanding of patterns of dropping out of school, begin with a review of the students who have dropped out over the last two years. For each student who has dropped out, develop a record-keeping form to record the major factors and conditions which contributed to that student dropping out (e.g., grade retentions; academic difficulties; discipline referrals; absenteeism/truancy; pregnancy; employment; living situation; age; sex; significant mental health issues; identification as a special education student, etc).

Carefully review the data for any red flags with respect to patterns of leavers. If you find specific patterns, you likely have found the key to planning interventions. If you cannot find specific patterns, it may be due to incomplete data or individual differences among students. When possible, follow up with the students who have left to find out if they have re-enrolled at another school, obtained a GED, or moved into the workforce. If it appears that the reasons provided for dropping out are primarily due to individual differences among students, the intervention planning (see section "*Dropout Prevention Approaches and Strategies*") may need to begin one student at a time, rather than as a larger, school-wide programming option.

Explore Current Patterns. Assuming you have already identified students who are at risk for dropping out (e.g. using the *DPS*), it will be important to compile the individual student data in order to see if patterns emerge for the school. Pay particular attention to *student reasons* for dropping out, perceptions of school support, and student demographics. For example, note the numbers of male and female students who have been identified as having a disability; at what grade level students are being identified as being at risk; the number of these students who have transferred into the school district; if they are suspected or confirmed substance users or abusers,

etc. The purpose of this particular compilation of data is to provide DPC members with an overview of at-risk behavioral patterns in the schools.

For students who have decided to leave school, an *exit interview* should be conducted. It is recognized that far too often, many students leave school without ever officially notifying anyone of their decision. Yet, some students do indeed make their intentions known, and it is with these particular students that an exit interview should be administered. Sample questions for an exit interview are provided in *Appendix I*.

This process can be helpful because it will provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their decision and may allow staff to offer them some viable alternatives to dropping out. Regardless of the actual outcomes of the student interviews with respect to *individual student decisions*, DPC members can obtain valuable information to assist them in their efforts to better understand the concerns and issues articulated by students within their SAU.

Understanding Staff Perceptions

Teachers, guidance counselors and other school staff often have a strong general sense of why students leave their school. In many cases, school staff (because of the trust that they have developed with specific students) will be able to provide good insights regarding the reasons individual students left school.

It also may be useful to obtain staff input about what factors in the school environment or about the dynamics among students that may be contributing to the student dropout problem. Some sample questions for staff are presented in *Appendix J*. Providing such a survey to each staff person in the school can be an effective method for identifying common beliefs, unknown facts, and obtaining creative ideas concerning dropouts in your school.

Envisioning the Ideal

The self-assessment continues with a comprehensive team approach to dropout prevention that includes an afternoon (or full day, or even several sessions held over the course of the year) of brainstorming and thinking creatively among the DPC members. These sessions provide an opportunity for members of the DPC to meet with school staff, students, parents and community members to talk about dropout prevention issues within the local school environment. These sessions should address multiple aspects of the local dropout problem.

Following are some suggested questions that could be used to generate discussion during these sessions:

- ✓ What specific types of programs might be most useful (e.g. mentoring, service learning, after school tutoring, etc.)?
- ✓ Do we need to provide more mental health services? If so, what type and how can we access and pay for them?
- ✓ Would peer support groups or classes in anger management be helpful?
- ✓ Should there be an increase in the provision of substance abuse counseling?
- ✓ Would student and staff development in conflict resolution be helpful?
- ✓ Do we need to develop targeted programming only for at-risk students? Should our efforts be directed to all students? Or, do we need to do both?
- ✓ How can we more actively involve parents and encourage their support?
- ✓ What can we do to ensure that students' voices are valued and respected?
- ✓ Do we offer alternative programming within our local school(s)? Should we consider an increase in the number and types of alternative programs? Which type(s) would be most effective? What are the specific characteristics and needs of the students who would most likely benefit from participation in an alternative program?
- ✓ Who is most qualified and most interested in teaching at-risk students?
- ✓ What type of experiences and programs might we use to help students during transitional periods, especially from elementary to middle level and from middle level to high school level?
- ✓ How successful are we in preventing students with disabilities from dropping out of school? What do we need to do to improve the graduation rate for students with disabilities?
- ✓ How could we alter our traditional school schedules, curriculum offerings, and school policies and practices to be more responsive to student needs while ensuring that all students successfully meet Learning Results standards?

The key to asking the above questions is to do so in a way that encourages individuals to express their viewpoints in a non-threatening, supportive environment and also to pose the questions in such a manner that will elicit specific responses or suggestions. For example, rather than asking: *Can we better serve the needs of our students?* (The answer to which undoubtedly will be "yes") ask: *How can we better serve the needs of our students and in what specific ways can we do this?*

Two self-assessment instruments which can be used by school personnel to assess their relative strengths and weaknesses with respect to their student dropout prevention efforts are presented in *Appendix K*. One of these instruments is designed to be used at the *individual school* level, while the other instrument is designed to be used at the *district* level.

As cited earlier in the MDPG, both the individual school and the district self-assessment instruments were developed by George S. Smith, Ph.D. and his colleagues as part of a federal grant awarded to the Maine Department of Education.

Following Through and Following Up

The DPC has met. The Dropout Prevention Plan is in its final draft. Now what? Within the plan you will have established timelines for implementing specific dropout prevention programs and strategies. Action may need to begin immediately, before the school year is complete, during the summer, or in the fall of the next school year, depending on how new, how urgent, and how easy or difficult you believe it will be to implement specific programs or strategies.

For example, the DPC may draft a policy on truancy for all grade levels which is intended to become effective immediately. There may also be a plan to implement a mentoring program the following fall at the middle school that will require more long-range planning. The DPC may choose to establish a subcommittee to monitor the progress and implementation of that program.

As soon as the dropout prevention plan is completed, the record keeping should continue so that the DPC is informed about the effectiveness of the overall plan. Interviews with potential dropouts should continue to be conducted, as well as follow-up interviews with students who have dropped out. Once you have tracked your dropout prevention efforts for a full year, you will have learned a great deal. You will be able to determine if the patterns are changing with respect to *who is dropping out*. Also, you will be in a better position to determine in which areas changes are needed and in which specific areas new efforts need to be made.

Once the DPC has begun its work, it may take some time to “get into a groove.” This is why it may be helpful for most of the members to remain on the DPC for more than one year. Rather than reinvent the process each year, having members who have been on the committee for an extended period will help the DPC to stay focused on its major goals. At the same time, adding a few new members each year can bring fresh ideas and strategies to the table. As has been emphasized throughout this *Guide*, the DPC must do *what works locally* in its efforts to prevent students from dropping out of school.

DROPOUT PREVENTION APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

Dropout prevention efforts generally involve three broad approaches:

- (1) Comprehensive school-wide improvement and restructuring efforts.
- (2) Supplementary and targeted programs designed specifically for students identified as being “at risk” for dropping out.
- (3) Alternative education programs that include separate schools off-campus, separate buildings on-campus, separate programs located within schools on-campus, and alternative instructional strategies within the regular school program.

There is a fourth category, though not technically considered a dropout *prevention* approach, which is important for members of DPCs in Maine to address:

- (4) Student “re-entry” or “recovery” programs. These programs are generally designed to encourage student dropouts to return to school to complete their high school graduation requirements.

The four types of dropout prevention approaches are all important in addressing the dropout problem within your school district. However, it is important to recognize that decades of research involving student dropouts have resulted in one overall finding: dropout prevention is a complex, multi-faceted issue – and no simple, “quick fix” solution has been identified to remedy the problem. *No single program, strategy, or intervention has been demonstrated to be effective in all situations.*

Dropout Prevention Approach – Type 1: School-wide Improvement and Restructuring

Comprehensive school-wide improvement and restructuring efforts are large-scale attempts to overhaul a system. This approach has been advocated as a way to reduce the student dropout rate by restructuring the overall school environment so that it is more responsive to the diverse needs of *all* students and to improve the quality of teaching and learning for *all* students. This approach is based on the assumption that if schools themselves were restructured to more effectively meet the diverse academic, personal, social, and developmental needs of *all* students, fewer students would leave school.

Restructuring efforts focus on changing and improving the overall quality of instruction and learning that takes place in our schools, as well as stressing the importance of developing and implementing a *school climate* that is more conducive to engaging students in a more personalized and relevant manner.

In recent years Maine has been very active with respect to comprehensive school reform. Several initiatives have been developed and implemented in this regard, most notably, the *Promising Futures* initiative. This particular reform effort which is designed “to improve education in Maine’s secondary schools” has resulted in a wide array of positive changes within numerous Maine high schools. Detailed information regarding *Promising Futures* can be found on the Maine Department of Education web site: www.maine.gov/education/. Go to the *Initiatives* button and click on *Promising Futures Links*.

Among several other comprehensive school reform efforts currently taking place in Maine are the *Communities in Schools Project* and the *Great Maine Schools Project*. Information on these reform efforts also can be found on the Maine Department of Education web site, cited above. Finally, the MDOE’s sponsored *Center for Inquiry on Secondary Education* has been heavily involved in several education reform efforts in Maine. Information on this Center’s work can be found on the MDOE web site or by calling 207.624.6629.

Dropout Prevention Approach - Type 2: Supplementary and Targeted Programs

Supplementary programs and targeted programs are designed specifically for students identified as being “at risk” for dropping out. This second broad approach that commonly has been used to prevent students from dropping out of school involves the development of a wide variety of (1) *supplementary* programs designed to enrich the overall school experience for all students by making it more relevant and meaningful (e.g., service-learning programs), and (2) *targeted* programs, strategies, and interventions designed specifically for those students considered to be “at risk” for dropping out (e.g., mentoring programs, academic tutoring programs, after-school programs, individual counseling, etc.). Several of these programs are elaborated upon later in this section of the *Guide*.

Dropout Prevention Approach – Type 3: Alternative Education

The rationale for the establishment of most alternative education programs is that many students require a *different* type of instruction, educational environment, and program in order for them to remain in school. Such programs help students maximize their full potential as adult citizens, and clearly, in some cases, minimize the adverse effects that students may be having upon other students within the regular education mainstream.

In the majority of cases, students who are considered to be candidates for alternative education programs typically are not viewed as students with disabilities and, therefore, not generally eligible for special education. Thus, in some ways, these are the students that tend to “fall

between the cracks of both the regular and special education systems.” Please refer to the section “*Dropout Prevention Approaches and Strategies*” for more detailed information on alternative education programs. Also visit the Institute web site for further information regarding alternative education programs in Maine: www.umaine.edu/issar/.

Dropout Prevention Approach – Type 4: Student Re-entry or Recovery Programs

In general, student “re-entry” or “recovery” programs offer one of two basic options for dropouts who wish to complete high school: (1) return to their former public high school, or (2) enroll in another program (e.g., an alternative school, GED program, Job Corps, etc.) that is outside of the traditional school setting. The strategies in working with these students differ little from those in working with students who are at risk with respect to the individual, psychosocial, and academic needs that must be addressed. Successful recovery programs are flexible, responsive to student needs, provide feedback, and offer a relevant curriculum. What may be different is the life situation and motivation of many “re-entry students.” They may be parenting, working, and may have discovered the disadvantages of being a high school dropout. Thus, their motivation may be quite high to obtain a diploma.

From the perspective of the DPC, one of the most important steps in an active dropout recovery agenda is to identify those students who have left school and to make a concerted effort to contact them. Current students may be informative in helping staff locate former students who have dropped out. Also, contacting the families of dropouts may provide useful information. Guidance personnel or former teachers should attempt to contact these students through phone calls and possibly home visits.

Once the young person has been contacted, the ensuing conversation should be focused on how they are doing and to what extent they are enjoying life after leaving school. The staff person should attempt to obtain a sense of whether the young person seems interested in going back to school in some capacity. The purpose of this initial conversation is not necessarily to reenroll the former student. Rather, it is to reestablish contact with the student and to discuss possible options for returning. It may be helpful to discuss with the youth their reasons for dropping out. What were the issues and factors that lead them to leave school? What might have kept them in school? They should also be reminded of the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of school completion programs (e.g., pursuing a GED).

For those youth who may consider returning to their former school, they may have unique needs that should be addressed by the school. For example, some of these former students may

need to work part-time; others may be parenting and require a flexible program; still others may have mental health needs that require counseling supports. The goal is to identify *specific* supports and accommodations that may be necessary in order for these youth to successfully return to school.

Dropout Prevention Programming Strategies and Interventions

In an effort to provide DPCs with specific programming strategies and interventions, the following section includes efforts that have been found to be valuable and effective at the national level with respect to prevention and the reduction of student dropouts. The National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University has identified *15 Dropout Prevention Strategies* that are considered to be effective. Many of the 15 strategies fall into more than one of the four categories of dropout prevention described above. In this section of the *Guide* some strategies have been elaborated upon more than others as we believe that they may be the most relevant for *MDPG* users.

Reference to specific dropout prevention programs throughout the United States can be found on our web site www.umaine.edu/issar/. Also, readers are encouraged to visit two other web sites which are devoted to dropout prevention programs and strategies at the national level (www.dropoutprevention.org and <http://www.schargel.com/scg/index.htm>).

Early Interventions:

(1) *Family Involvement*, (2) *Early Childhood Education* and (3) *Reading and Writing Programs*.

The importance of early intervention cannot be overemphasized. The earlier DPCs begin to observe and to track the progress and difficulties of the youngest students in their schools, the more DPCs will be able to assist teachers and administrators in intervening *early* to help these students maintain school engagement. The same principle applies for early childhood education as well as reading and writing programs. These programs are designed to help children “get their skills up to par” by the time they enter school, or even once they’ve begun school.

Family involvement clearly is not limited to early intervention. Its importance begins with birth and extends throughout the educational process. We realize that *some* schools may not always have an especially large number of actively-involved parents. This may be particularly true in today’s society when often many parents are struggling with a wide array of personal, economic, and social difficulties. Nevertheless, school personnel must continue to be persistent, and often quite creative, in their efforts to actively involve parents in their child’s school program. These efforts are especially important regarding parents of students who are viewed as being *at risk*.

The parents of many of these students may feel disconnected from their child's school. Some may feel unwelcome or that they have "little to offer." For still other parents, their own early schooling experience may not have been particularly enjoyable – and they continue to harbor negative feelings about *school*. Yet, the vast majority of parents truly want the best for their children and they need to be encouraged to become active participants in their child's educational process. Indeed, without the active participation and support of their parents, many students, even those who may demonstrate a high level of resiliency, likely will leave school early. Thus, it is incumbent upon school personnel to take whatever steps necessary to seek and maintain active family involvement in their children's education. Information regarding specific programs and strategies to increase family involvement can be found on our web site: www.umaine.edu/issar/.

The Basic Core Strategies:

(4) *Mentoring and Tutoring*, (5) *Service-Learning*, (6) *Alternative Schooling*, and (7) *Out-Of-School Enhancement*

What works at different age and grade levels is an important consideration in dropout prevention. Barr & Parrett (2001) suggest that enriched education should take place at all grade levels. However, enrichment programming may take several different forms: academic enrichment, school-wide challenges and common curricula, and service-learning. Common skills should be encouraged throughout age and grade spans, such as conflict resolution, future academic planning, career building, and leadership. However, research indicates that in order to be effective, different approaches and different strategies must be used at the elementary, middle, and high school levels to foster these skills.

#4 Mentoring and Tutoring

Mentoring and tutoring can be very valuable strategies to help students with respect to their personal, social, emotional, and academic growth. A wide variety of mentoring or tutoring programs exist, including student-student and adult-student mentoring/tutoring.

- ✓ *Student-student:* Mentoring and tutoring can be implemented for any age group. Some elementary schools have older children "buddy up" with children in younger grades to work on reading and writing skills. This strategy often is referred to as *cross-age tutoring*. At the high school level, schools have designed mentoring programs for first-year students who have upperclassmen as mentors to ease the transition from middle to high school. When students serve as mentors, they often benefit from learning responsibility and by being acknowledged for the skills they possess. These programs frequently are considered to have the potential to produce positive outcomes for both the students doing the mentoring and also for the students receiving the mentoring.
- ✓ *Adult-student mentoring.* This type of programming also can be used with any age student. Adult mentors can provide good role modeling, inspiration, support, and ongoing experience in working with students. Adult mentors also provide job-shadowing opportunities and help students think about career aspirations and the overall importance of education in their future. Maine is fortunate to have several active and effective youth mentoring programs in current operation. For more information on these programs, visit www.mainementoring.org.

#5 Service-Learning

Service-learning programs are potentially effective dropout prevention tools. The National Dropout Prevention Center defines service-learning as *a teaching and learning method that connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning, personal growth, and civic responsibility*. Service-learning can be a powerful vehicle for real school reform at all grade levels. Several elements of a successful service-learning program have been identified:

- ❖ Students are engaged in community-based learning projects.
- ❖ Students are the leaders of the project.
- ❖ Students learn by doing.
- ❖ It is reciprocal; students and those who benefit from the students' services learn from each other.
- ❖ Students reflect on what they are doing through writing and discussion of applications in a real-world context.

(Shumer & Duckenfield, 2004, p. 141)

Middle schools students, in particular, have been shown to benefit from service-learning activities. Students have the opportunity to work as a team, build their self-esteem and self-efficacy, and collaborate with positive adult role models. Studies have validated the positive effects of service-learning on at risk students (Follman, 1998; O'Bannon, 1999). Service-learning has proven to be particularly effective in reducing teen pregnancy (Kirby, 2001; Melchior, 1999). Also, students who have participated in service-learning projects during their school careers have been found to be more politically active and to vote on a more regular basis than their peers who did not participate in service-learning activities (Morgan & Streb, 2001).

Several key characteristics have been identified in the literature as constituting “best practices” with respect to service-learning projects. These include:

- ❖ A variety of learning materials and instructional methods are used.
- ❖ There is time for reflection.
- ❖ Alternative assessments are used.
- ❖ Students are involved in the curricular planning.
- ❖ Students apply their knowledge and skills to a community need.
- ❖ Semester or year-long projects have more impact.
- ❖ Having fun is emphasized!

(Pearson, 2002; Shumer, 1997)

For further information on service-learning projects and activities in Maine refer to the Maine Department of Education web site www.state.me.us/education/lisa/homepage.htm.

#6 *Alternative Schooling*

Alternative education programs are widely regarded as one viable educational option for students who are not successful in traditional school environments. Although wide variance exists regarding the specific definition of *alternative education*, as well as the specific types of programs that are viewed as being *alternative*, increasingly these programs are being implemented across the nation (and in Maine) to serve students who are viewed as being at risk of school failure and at risk for dropping out of school.

The U.S. Department of Education defines alternative education as *a public elementary/secondary school that addresses the needs of students which typically cannot be met in a regular school and provides nontraditional education which is not categorized solely as regular education, special education, vocational education, gifted and talented or magnet school programs* (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 55).

“Without this program, I wouldn’t be in school. We all support each other here.”

Kelly, age 16
(Student at an alternative education program in Maine)

Alternative education programs vary considerably with respect to several factors including (1) their philosophical orientation; (2) their organizational structure; (3) their location; (4) the types and characteristics of the students that they serve; (5) their specific curriculum offerings; and (6) the background and training of staff. In Maine, alternative education programs exist in a variety of settings: as separate off-campus schools; in separate buildings located on the school campus; as separate programs within the regular school building. Also, Maine students are served in several private alternative schools. In addition, many Maine students currently receive “alternative instruction” within their regular public school classes.

Traditionally, most alternative education programs in Maine have operated at the high school level. However, in recent years, there has been increased interest in the development of alternative education programs at the middle school level, and in some cases, even at the elementary level. Since 2000, the Institute for the Study of Students At Risk has been actively involved in conducting several research projects involving the status of alternative education in Maine. Three major reports have been generated as a result of these studies, and they are available on the Institute’s web site www.umaine.edu/issar/.

#7 *Out-Of-School Enhancement (After School Programs)*

After-school programs commonly are viewed as having the potential to prevent students from dropping out of school. These programs can provide both academic and social support to at-risk students and frequently allow students to gain exposure to new skills, and activities that these students may not have previously experienced (e.g., drama, music, woodworking, etc.). Keeping children and adolescents off the streets decreases opportunities for them to get into trouble. These programs provide students with opportunities to socially interact with others who may not live in their neighborhoods. For further information regarding after-school programs for at-risk students, please see our web site www.umaine.edu/issar/.

Making The Most of Instruction:

(8) *Professional Development*, (9) *Openness to Diverse Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences*, (10) *Instructional Technologies*, and (11) *Individualized Learning*

#8 Professional Development

Effective professional development programs and activities are essential in order to provide school personnel with those skills necessary to implement the optimal learning climate for all students and especially for those students who are the most vulnerable and considered to be at high risk for dropping out of school. The topic of professional development is very comprehensive and exceeds the scope of this *Guide*. Maine public school personnel already are heavily involved in a wide variety of staff development activities which are designed to help them develop and implement effective instructional and social programs for their students.

Understandably, in recent years most staff development activities have focused heavily, if not exclusively in some schools, on student assessment and curriculum issues in an effort to help students and schools meet the academic requirements related to education reform policies and practices, Maine's System of *Learning Results* and the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*. Clearly, Maine public school administrators and teachers presently are under considerable pressure to ensure that their students and their schools meet *AYP* requirements.

Arguably, professional staff development in the areas of student assessment and curriculum will benefit all students, including those considered to be at risk for dropping out. Nevertheless, it is critical that other areas of professional staff development not be ignored in the process. School personnel need opportunities to increase both their awareness of and their skill development regarding "at risk students."

Not that long ago, it was common to witness the implementation of numerous staff development programs in Maine schools that focused on a wide variety of *prevention* issues and topics (e.g., student suicide, child and adolescent mental health, violence and bullying, student mentoring, conflict resolution, etc.). Staff development involving these programs continues to be offered in many Maine schools; however, in many other schools, training for staff in these areas has been substantially reduced or, in some cases, entirely eliminated. The reason frequently offered for the reduction or elimination of these staff development opportunities: "*There simply isn't any time any more. All of our staff development sessions need to be devoted to student assessment and curriculum issues.*"

"There simply isn't any time any more. All of our staff development sessions need to be devoted to student assessment and curriculum issues."

Mrs. Johnson (middle school teacher)

While not intending to diminish the importance of staff development in the areas of assessment and curriculum, it is imperative that we not lose sight of the importance of high quality, comprehensive staff development in other areas, especially those areas that have

been identified in this *Guide* as being essential for keeping at risk students in school and on track for graduation.

#9 *Openness to Diverse Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences*

Making the most of instruction refers to communicating academic material, content and ideas to all students in the way that works best for each student. In the classroom, it can be challenging to address the learning needs of all students. However, by adapting instruction for students who may learn better through active participation, rather than direct teaching, or by providing autonomy in the selection of topics of study, student engagement may increase. It is important to engage the student personally. Educators of at-risk students commonly report that their students, many of whom were previously perceived to be unmotivated in school, were more likely to engage in the learning process once these students experienced a teacher who paid close attention to them, who asked them what *they* wanted to learn, and who talked with them about their school challenges,

The diverse learning styles of students need to be respected, valued, and accommodated. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences provides teachers with different options for successfully meeting the learning needs of many students considered to be at risk (Gardner, 1983, 1991, 1999). Also, Richard Sagor and Jonas Cox, in their recent work (*At-Risk Students: Reaching and Teaching Them*, 2nd edition, Eye on Education, 2004) provide multiple strategies that teachers can employ to effectively *teach* and *reach* students who are viewed as being at highest risk for dropping out of school.

#10 *Instructional Technologies*

Educational technology has been developing at such a rapid pace that it is virtually impossible to predict which specific technologies will be available to students in the year 2010. Also, today's job market depends heavily on technology, computer skills, and Internet literacy. Five years from now, it is very likely that this will be even more so the case. Clearly, schools need to do everything possible to ensure that their students are skilled and ready to compete in this ever-growing technology age.

Students considered to be at high risk for dropping out need to have special attention paid to them regarding their level of technological skills. First, these skills will be important in order for them to successfully complete their secondary school graduation requirements. Without them, they are more likely to become discouraged and feel incompetent, and, in some cases, their lack of technological skills could represent the "tipping point" involving their decision to leave school early.

Second, the reality is that many (but certainly not all) students considered to be "at risk" in our educational system often are the very young men and young women, even if they graduate, who do not go on to pursue a post-secondary education. They tend to remain in our communities and seek employment in them. Thus, it is especially important for these students to have the opportunity to gain those technological skills necessary for them to find jobs which require these particular skills.

#11 *Individualized Learning*

As cited several times throughout the *MDPG*, one of the most widely-recognized elements of successful student dropout prevention programs is *personalization*. Because students have

diverse learning styles and different emotional, behavioral, and social needs, it is critical that students viewed as being at risk are provided with the most individualized and personalized learning environment possible. This is true whether these students are in regular class settings or in alternative learning environments.

Every student should have a personal learning plan. While not as comprehensive nor as complex as Individual Education Plans (IEPs) required for students with identified disabilities, personal learning plans currently are required for all Maine students who participate in public school alternative education programs. It is suggested that these plans would be helpful for *all Maine students*, and if developed and implemented properly, they would constitute a very effective dropout prevention strategy within all of our schools, at all grade levels. For further elaboration with regard to Personal Learning Plans, please refer to *Maine Education and Schools Statutes (Chapter 127)* cited earlier in the *Guide*.

Making the Most of the Wider Community:

(12) *Systemic Renewal*, (13) *Community Collaboration*, (14) *Career Education and Workforce Readiness*, and (15) *Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution*

#12 Systemic Renewal

Improving the “system of schooling” in the United States as well as in Maine has been the goal of policy makers, educators, advocacy groups, and citizens for many decades. In recent years, *standards-based reform* and *whole-school reform* have dominated efforts to *reform* or *renew* the educational system. Clearly, improving the educational system for *all students* will have a major impact upon improving educational opportunities for students considered to be at risk. Likewise, positive changes in the school culture and in the ways that the school is operated and in the ways that instruction is delivered certainly will improve the chances for keeping at risk students in school (arguably, the most effective dropout prevention strategy of all).

It is beyond the purpose and the scope of this *Guide* to discuss these reform efforts in detail. However, readers are encouraged to refer to the Institute for the Study of Students At Risk web site for research papers related to this topic: www.umaine.edu/issar/. Also, for more information on comprehensive school-wide improvement and restructuring efforts, refer to the section “*Dropout Prevention Approaches and Strategies*.”

#13 Community Collaboration

Community involvement is an important and mandatory component of effective dropout prevention. Input from residents of the local community often can provide valuable help in the area of student dropout prevention. It is through *community connections* that programs such as adult mentoring and job shadowing frequently originate and develop. In this *Guide* major emphasis is placed upon what *schools* can do relative to dropout prevention efforts. However, it is recognized that community participation and collaboration are critical components of most successful dropout prevention efforts. Readers are encouraged to refer to the Institute web site www.umaine.edu/issar/ to obtain further information and resources involving community collaboration efforts.

#14 Career Education and Workforce Readiness

Franklin Schargel and Jay Smink (*Strategies To Help Solve Our School Dropout Problem*, Eye on Education, 2001) capture the importance of career education and workforce readiness as effective student dropout prevention strategies:

“Almost all students will eventually enter the workforce, many embarking on multiple careers. The challenge – for leaders in education, business, and politics – is to give all students the best possible start. This means providing an appropriate blend of solid education competencies and career-based competencies. If we agree that neither education nor employment should be subservient to the other, we may also agree that both should serve our students, and serve them well” (p. 207).

Students at risk for dropping out require comprehensive career guidance and career development programs. Several national programs are designed to assist at risk students develop career-building skills and competencies that will allow them to become successful members of their adult society. Among the most common programs in this regard are the *School-To-Work Programs* <http://www.state.me.us/education/it/index.shtml> and *Job Corps* <http://jobcorps.doleta.gov/centers/me.cfm>. In Maine, the *Jobs for Maine Graduates Program (JMG)* has been very successful in meeting the needs of many students.

#15 Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution

The relationship between violence prevention and dropout prevention, as well as between conflict resolution and dropout prevention, should be very clear. Many students drop out of school because of “behavioral difficulties.” These are the students who typically receive large numbers of disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and/or expulsions. Frequently, these are the same students who are referred to in the dropout literature as being *pushed out* or *discharged*.

Student misbehavior often is cited as one of the major factors contributing to dropping out of school. Often “violent behaviors” are identified very early in a student’s career. One recent study (Gilliam, 2005) showed that an unprecedented large number of pre-school children were being expelled from school due to “behavioral problems.” Today’s children and adolescents increasingly are being exposed to violence in their homes and in their communities. Also, many students witness or are involved daily in violent acts within their schools. It wasn’t that long ago that school shootings dominated the media, and practically all schools initiated violence prevention policies and practices. While no longer receiving the focus of attention that it once did, violence remains a problem within far too many schools. It may not be “gun violence” necessarily but violence of a different type, including bullying and harassment.

Maine is fortunate to have a nationally recognized program available in the area of bullying prevention. This program, under the direction of Chuck Saufler, provides school personnel with training opportunities and resources designed to reduce bullying and aggressive behaviors in children. The web site for this program is www.bullyfree.com. For additional information and resources on this topic, please refer to *Appendix L* in this *Guide* and also the Institute web site www.umaine.edu/issar/.

Maine is fortunate to have a nationally recognized program available in the area of bullying prevention. This program, under the direction of Chuck Saufier, provides school personnel with training opportunities and resources designed to reduce bullying and aggressive behaviors in children.

Some students do not engage in violent acts per se but they still experience difficulties within their school environment because they lack the social skills necessary to resolve conflicts with peers and/or with adults. Many of these students, as a result of their behaviors, receive a wide range of disciplinary consequences often including suspensions or expulsions. Several excellent programs are available to help students develop effective conflict resolution strategies. For a selected listing of these programs, please refer to *Appendix L*. A more comprehensive listing of these programs can be found on the Institute web site www.umaine.edu/issar/.

WHAT WORKS IN DROPOUT PREVENTION

Summarizing the results of extensive federal evaluations with respect to the efficacy of specific dropout prevention models or programs, Dynarski (2000, 2004) concluded that *no clear menu of program options for helping students at risk of dropping out exist*. Despite the fact that national studies do not yield sufficiently solid empirical evidence to recommend that one particular dropout prevention model should be preferred over another, Dynarski suggested that results from these studies did identify some specific *features* of effective programs and that these features should be taken into consideration when developing new dropout prevention models.

The most significant feature of effective programs that emerged in the studies was that of *personalization*. In these programs, staff appeared to have developed a very close, personal relationship with their students. Intensive efforts were made (1) to determine why individual students were having difficulty, and (2) to actively work with them on a personal basis to help them overcome these difficulties. Dynarski (2004) identified *five major elements or features* of successful dropout prevention programs:

- (1) They operated in *small* settings and school staff paid attention to student's needs inside and outside the classroom.
- (2) Students had more *access to adults* who could help them with issues and problems.
- (3) Staff members expressed a *willingness to help* these students and often went out of their way to help them.
- (4) These programs recognized that students often had family or personal problems that hindered their ability to attend or be successful in school and tried *counseling* or other interventions to help students cope with these problems.
- (5) These programs recognized that students needed a measure of *academic challenge*, that even students with undistinguished academic records could respond to teachers pushing them to learn, especially when learning somehow was connected to their personal experiences.

(Dynarski, 2004, pp. 265-266)

➔ Keys to Successful Programming for At-Risk Students

A comprehensive review of the national literature suggests that the following elements, qualities, and features are essential for the development and implementation of successful dropout prevention programs.

Essential Features and Elements of Successful Dropout Prevention Programs

- ❖ *Intensive* - rather than brief, superficial, or episodic.
- ❖ *Comprehensive* - focusing on more than just a piece of the problem.
- ❖ Utilize a *strengths-based approach* - recognizes, nurtures, and builds upon the resiliency and strengths of each student.
- ❖ Sensitive to the unique attributes and needs of a particular school-community.
- ❖ Teachers are well-trained, have the time, administrative support and the encouragement to provide individualized attention and instruction.
- ❖ Ongoing opportunities exist for close teacher-student personal relationships, including low teacher-student ratios.
- ❖ Mutual caring, respect, and support between students and teachers is evident and valued.
- ❖ Clear rules exist regarding students' expectations and behaviors, along with consistent and fair consequences implemented for violations.
- ❖ A challenging academic curriculum that is integrated with the personal and social needs of students.
- ❖ Programming and strategies are developmentally appropriate.
- ❖ Flexible scheduling (e.g., extended or abbreviated school day, a weekend schedule, and/or a summer program) as well as flexibility with respect to earning credits toward a high school diploma.
- ❖ Each student has a personal learning plan tailored to his/her personal, academic, social, and career objectives.
- ❖ Support around issues both in and out of school through counseling and/or mentoring is provided.
- ❖ An environment that is free from harassment and one in which cooperation is emphasized.
- ❖ An environment exists in which students feel *safe* and *cared for* and also in which they learn to care for others.
- ❖ Meaningful parent/guardian involvement is sought and valued.
- ❖ Collaborative partnerships exist with public agencies, community organizations, and citizens in the community.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the *MDPG* numerous factors and issues involving student dropout prevention have been presented. Clearly, no simple solutions or quick fixes exist regarding student dropouts. We have discussed the complexity of the dropout issue. Nevertheless, we presently do have a general knowledge base upon which to draw and make recommendations.

Decades of research on student dropouts, especially studies conducted within the past few years, have provided us a great deal of valuable information regarding *what works* and *what doesn't* work with respect to keeping students in school and on track toward receiving a high school diploma. Following are suggested to be the most important and the most critical factors and issues for members of Maine's Dropout Prevention Committees to consider in their efforts to help students graduate from high school with a regular diploma.

✦ The Most Important Factors and Issues To Consider ✦

- ❖ Dropping out of school most often is a complex process, involving the interaction of several factors and conditions (often interrelated) including the individual student, family, school, peers, and community. Student dropout prevention efforts, to be effective, must actively and meaningfully involve the entire community, including parents, citizens, businesses, other agencies, and most of all, the *students themselves*. School personnel alone cannot, and should not, be expected to solve the “dropout problem.”
- ❖ The act of “dropping out” often represents the *final stage of a long, cumulative process*. Effective dropout prevention efforts must *begin early* and be *comprehensive*. Many students manifest behaviors very early during their school experience (beginning, in some cases when they very first enter school) that suggest that they may be *at risk* for eventually dropping out of school. Thus, arguably dropout prevention efforts must be initiated during the early elementary school years, or even as suggested by some, during the pre-school years. Typically, dropout prevention programs are implemented at the high school level. For many students, *this is too late*. Early identification and early intervention are the keys to success in most dropout prevention programs.
- ❖ Students at risk of dropping out of school are not a homogeneous group. They represent a wide range of children and youth with very diverse attributes, behaviors, values, and needs. Remember that *not all students who drop out fit typical student dropout profiles* (e.g., significant academic and/or behavioral difficulties, chronic absenteeism, and instructional and social disengagement in school, etc.). Often ignored are those students characterized in the literature as *Quiet Dropouts*. These are the students, who although possibly manifesting some academic difficulties, have no history of significant behavioral problems, attend school on a fairly consistent basis, participate in some school activities – and largely go unnoticed – until they choose to leave school.
- ❖ Dropping out is not simply a result of academic problems or academic failure alone but, in most cases, results from both academic *and* social problems in school. Clearly, chronic academic difficulties, especially within the literacy domain, have been shown to be a strong predictor for dropping out. However, it is essential that students who manifest social

problems not be overlooked. Student *disengagement* (both with respect to learning *and* the social aspects of the school culture) often is a strong predictor for dropping out. *In order to be effective, dropout prevention strategies need to address both academic and social issues.*

- ❖ Students with disabilities are at much higher risk for dropping out of school than are their non-disabled peers. Students who are identified within the *Emotional Disability* category are especially vulnerable for dropping out. Dropout Prevention Committees need to pay very close attention to their students who have identified disabilities and ensure that they are provided with the necessary interventions and support systems to keep them in school and on track to graduate.
- ❖ The use of student dropout predictor scales to identify those students considered to be at *high risk* for dropping out can be useful. However, these *risk factor lists used in isolation* can be very misleading. They often fail to identify those particular students who actually may be at highest risk and in need of intervention. In some cases, these risk factor lists label the “wrong students” -- based upon false, and arguably dangerous and discriminatory assumptions. *Both student risk and protective factors must be considered.* Many students are able to overcome commonly regarded “dropout risk factors” as a result of their own resilience as well as the positive supports that exist within their lives. We need to identify, respect, and nurture the individual and collective strengths that many children and adolescents possess. Also, we must fully capitalize upon them in our efforts to encourage these students to remain in school and to graduate.
- ❖ Many students drop out of school because they feel that they don’t really belong or aren’t *connected* to their school culture, including its curriculum. Many student dropouts report experiencing feelings of rejection, alienation, and a lack of personal relationships with their teachers, administrators, other adults within the school, and often, with their peer group. *Personalization* widely is regarded as the single most important element of successful dropout prevention programs.
- ❖ Results of virtually all empirical studies strongly suggest that *retention*, even in the lower elementary grades, significantly increases the likelihood of dropping out of school. It has been widely reported that even one retention strongly increases the likelihood of a student dropping out and that more than one retention almost guarantees that a student will eventually drop out. Given the strong accountability provisions (especially *AYP*) of both *No Child Left Behind* and *Maine’s System of Learning Results*, increasing pressures exist to retain students. School personnel are strongly encouraged to seek all alternatives possible to avoid retaining students.
- ❖ *Transitions* from elementary schools to middle schools, and especially from middle schools into high schools, contribute to high levels of stress and frustration for many students, and in some cases, contribute to their dropping out. This also has been demonstrated to be true for students who *transfer*. Likewise students who enter high school from smaller “sending towns” have been shown to be at higher risk for eventually dropping out. Some of these students experience difficulty making a successful transition and social adjustment to the “larger high school culture.” It is recommended that Dropout Prevention Committee members *pay close attention* to these students regarding their risk potential for dropping out. *Consideration should be given to the establishment of an intensive “high school entry program” for these particular students, one offered at the very beginning of their freshman year.*

- ❖ The *ninth grade* frequently has been identified as the most critical year with respect to the overall student dropout problem. Many students often experience a great deal of difficulty negotiating both the academic and social demands of the ninth grade successfully. Ninth grade course failure has been shown to be a powerful predictor for students eventually dropping out of school.
- ❖ Suspensions for poor attendance, tardiness, and truancy often result in many students believing that they not only are unwelcome in school but also that they do not belong in school. The longer that these students are out of school, time and opportunities to learn are lost. Typically, these students fall further behind academically and lose credits, and many, develop the attitude, “I will never be able to catch up anyway, so why bother to try to return to school?” It is recommended that Dropout Prevention Committees (1) review the behavioral and disciplinary policies that currently exist within their schools to determine whether these policies truly are supportive of keeping students in school – and not simply designed to *discharge* them; and (2) develop a specific plan to contact students who have already dropped out, maintain contact with these students, and work with these students in an effort to help them complete their secondary school educational requirements.
- ❖ At the local school district level, dropout prevention should be viewed as comprising three major approaches: (1) supplemental and support services (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, counseling, social support services, student after-school programs, etc.) for students considered to be at risk; (2) the provision of a variety of alternative education programs designed to provide different learning environments for those students who do not do well in conventional schools or in traditional classes (including off-campus alternative schools, separate alternative schools on campus, and alternative programs within conventional schools); and (3) school-wide restructuring efforts that focus on changing schools so that they are more interesting and more responsive learning environments for *all* students, especially for those students considered to be at risk for dropping out.
- ❖ One of the most important things that Dropout Prevention Committees can do to reduce their student dropout rate is to advocate strongly that teachers are fully supported in their efforts to develop and maintain personal relationships with their students, especially those students viewed as being the most vulnerable for dropping out of school. *Individual teacher efforts to establish personal relationships with students* is widely regarded as the most effective intervention to keep at-risk students in school. In the current educational climate of increased student and school academic accountability and high stakes testing, teachers need to be encouraged and supported in developing personal relationships with students.
- ❖ Successful dropout prevention programs contain the following essential elements, features, and/or qualities: (1) intensive; (2) comprehensive; (3) flexible; (4) use a strengths-based approach; (5) sensitive and tailored to the unique needs of students and a particular school-community; (6) involve teachers who are well-trained and strongly committed to working with “at-risk” students and are supported in their efforts; (7) provide a challenging academic curriculum that is integrated with the personal and social needs of students; (8) provide personal learning plans for students; (9) promote mutual caring and respect between teachers and students; (10) provide students with clear expectations, along with consistent and fair consequences for violations; (11) provide support for students’ emotional, behavioral, and social needs; (12) a curriculum and strategies that are developmentally appropriate; (13) use measurable outcomes for both individual students and program – and can demonstrate accountability via evaluation of these outcomes; and (14) provide ongoing opportunities for close teacher-student personal relationships.

A Concluding Perspective

Throughout the *Maine Dropout Prevention Guide*, we have repeatedly emphasized that *student dropout prevention* is a complex issue and one which requires a great deal of hard work and the collaborative commitment on the part of many individuals. While we believe this to be accurate, we also believe that effective dropout prevention can be accomplished, and that we already have in place much of the knowledge and many of the resources to allow this to happen. What it will take is the will, along with the political and public support, to ensure that all Maine students, especially those considered to be “at risk” for dropping out, are not ignored and that they are provided with the academic, mental health, and social supports that they require to successfully complete high school.

Because the issues and problems involving at-risk students and student dropout prevention often are viewed as extremely complex and nearly impossible to solve, many observers tend to feel immobilized in their efforts to help these students. However, we suggest that *what at-risk students require to help them graduate is really quite simple*. They need:

- ❖ to believe in themselves and their abilities;
- ❖ to perceive a sense of relevance, importance, meaningfulness, and value in their curriculum;
- ❖ to feel respected, valued, and “connected” within their school culture;
- ❖ to have a plan in place that provides them with the direction and the *hope* that their goals are doable and attainable;
- ❖ to receive the academic, emotional/behavioral, and social supports that they require; and
- ❖ to be taught by competent, caring teachers -- teachers who themselves feel respected, valued, and supported within own school-communities.

We also need to pay close attention to at-risk students and student dropouts and to help them for yet another reason, one which may be viewed as being basically *selfish* or *self-serving*. Many of these students are the very same ones who typically do not go on to college or leave Maine to pursue other career opportunities out-of-state. They typically remain, live, and work in our communities. We depend upon these persons to provide us with services within the community which we need but often take for granted. Their children will attend our schools. Many of them will become our neighbors. They will either support the economic and social well-being of our local communities, or they will become viewed by many as a “drain” on the overall

well-being of our communities. To a great extent, this will be determined by whether or not they are able to graduate from high school.

Thus, while the specific reasons suggested as to why we should be concerned with student dropouts in Maine may vary, it is very important that we not ignore these youth. We need to take whatever actions are necessary to support them in their efforts to finish school. If we don't, *all of us* will experience the negative consequences of our neglect and inaction.

"I can't believe I'm graduating tonight. I thought about dropping out many, many times. I almost did six months ago. Mr. B [social studies teacher] just kept talking to me and convinced me to stay. I'm now happy that I did."

Jason, 18 years old (graduated from high school on June 5, 2005)

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APPENDIX A

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS
(NCES)

DROPOUT AND SCHOOL COMPLETION
CALCULATION RATES

**NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (NCES)
DROPOUT AND SCHOOL COMPLETION CALCULATION RATES**

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Dropout Rates

NCES employs a variety of methods for calculating and reporting student dropout rates. Each of these methods, which are described below, provides a different type of information. The statistics reported within each of these method descriptions represent the most recent data available for public school dropouts in the United States. They represent data for students in 2000 (*NCES, 2002, Dropout Rates in the United States: 2000*).

Event Dropout Rates: the proportion of students who leave school *each year* without completing a high school program. For example, the event dropout rates for 2000 describe the proportion of youth ages 15 through 24 who dropped out of grades 10-12 in the twelve months preceding October 2000. Event dropout rates represent *an annual measure* of recent dropout occurrences. The *event dropout rate* for U.S. students in 2000 was *4.8 percent (4.8%)*.

The event rate reflects the proportion of students who leave school prior to the end of the school year without completing the high school program, whether or not they returned the next year. This type of measure is useful in spotting dropout trends on a year-to-year basis. However, it fails to provide an overall picture of what portion of young adults are dropouts. According to this definition of dropout rate, an individual could complete high school by either earning a high school diploma or receiving an alternative credential (e.g., a GED).

The *national event rate* is computed from sample data collected from 50,000 U.S. households by the Census Bureau in its October Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). It is defined as the percent of 15-24-year-olds who were enrolled in high school the prior October but had not completed high school and were not enrolled in grades 10 to 12 a year later. (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002).

NCES publishes state event dropout rates for grades 9 to 12 based upon state-reported data collected through its annual survey of state and local public educational agencies, known as the Common Core of Data (CCD). The number of participating states using sufficiently consistent data definitions and collection procedures to be included in *NCES'* annual report increased from 24 states in the 1991-1992 school year to 37 states and the District of Columbia for the 1997-1998 school year (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002).

It should be recognized that the event rate method for calculating dropouts, because it calculates students who drop out in grades 10-12, generally ignores those students who do not

attend school for substantial periods of time prior to their sixteenth birthdays when they become eligible to drop out of school.

Status Dropout Rates: Provide cumulative data on dropouts among all young adults within a specified age range (e.g., 16-to 24-year olds) who are not enrolled in a high school program and have not completed high school. The status dropout rate measures the portion of young adults who are not in school rather than the percentage who drop out in any given year. Status rates are higher than even rates because they include *all* dropouts regardless of when these individuals last attended school. For example, in October 2000, some 3.8 million young adults were not enrolled in a high school program and had not completed high school. In 2000, these youth accounted for 10.9 percent of the 34.6 million 16 through 24 year olds in the United States. Thus, the *status dropout rate* for U.S. students in 2000 was *10.9 percent* (10.9%). The national status dropout rate has remained relatively stable since the 1990s, fluctuating between 10.9 percent and 12.5 percent.

Since status rates reveal the extent of the dropout problem in the population, these rates often are used to *estimate* the need for further education and training designed to help dropouts participate in the national economy.

NCES uses data from the CPS to calculate the national status dropout rate. *NCES*, in their calculations, considers those students who earn an alternative credential (e.g., a GED), to have completed high school. It should be noted that the Annie E. Casey Foundation also uses data from CPS to calculate national status dropout rates, but for a smaller age range, 16-19-year olds. This foundation also uses data from CPS to calculate status dropout rates for each state. However, because of the small sample sizes for some states the margins of error are large and there is no statistically significant difference in the dropout rate between many states with similar rates. (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002).

Although status dropout rates accurately portray the proportion of individuals who complete a secondary high school program with a regular diploma or its equivalent (e.g., a GED), these rates provide little information relative to within-group differences because they do not account for members of a cohort over time, similar to event dropout rates, status rates generally neglect students who have not reached age 16.

Cohort Dropout Rates: These rates measure what happens to a group of students over a period of time. These rates are based on repeated measures of a cohort of students with shared experiences and reveal how many students starting in a specific grade (e.g., the 9th grade), drop out over time. Commonly, a cohort dropout rate is the percentage of students who begin grade 9 together in a given year but drop out of school before receiving a regular school diploma, usually in a 4-year period (until the end of grade 12). Typically, data from longitudinal studies provide

more background and contextual information on the students who drop out than are available through either the CPS or CCD data collections.

The *NCES*-published cohort rates are based on data collected through its National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) - which followed an 1988 eighth-grade student cohort through four waves of data collection (1988, 1990, 1992, and 1994) (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002). Problems often arise in obtaining accurate information of cohort dropout rates because students move, change schools for other reasons (e.g., entering a private school, disciplinary action, or participation in a special program) or are retained in grade (Hayes et al., 2002).

Differences Between CCD (Common Core of Data) and CPS (Current Population Survey) Data Sets Re: Dropout Collection Procedures: Conceptually, the dropout collection through CCD is designed to be consistent with the current CPS procedures. However, there are operational differences in dropout collection procedures between the two data sets. First, the CCD represents a state's public school dropout counts; in other words, the dropout rate represents the number of public school students who have dropped out over the total number of public school students enrolled in the state. This differs from the CPS dropout counts in several ways. First, the CPS dropout counts include students who were enrolled in either public or private schools. Second, the CPS is a count of young adults who live in the state, not necessarily those who went to school in that state. Third, the CCD collects data on dropouts from grades 7 through 12 and reports event dropout rates based on grades 9 through 12, versus only grades 10 through 12 in the CPS. Fourth, the CCD collection is based on administrative records, rather than a household survey, as in the CPS. Fifth, in contrast to the CPS, the CCD collection counts those students who leave public school to enroll in GED programs (outside the public education system) as dropouts, while they are not counted as dropouts in the estimates *NCES* publishes based on CPS data. Finally, the CPS is not traditionally used to report state-level dropout estimates.

High School Completion Rates: Measures the portion of individuals within a particular age group (usually 18- to 24-year olds) not currently enrolled in high school or below who have completed a high school diploma or an equivalent credential, including a *General Educational Development (GED)* credential. The status dropout rate and the completion rate differ because they are based on different populations. Only the status dropout rate calculation includes 16- and 17-year olds and those 18- through 24-year olds who are still enrolled in a high school program. Because of these differences, the status dropout rate and the high school completion rate are not the simple inverse of each other. The national average high school percent completion rate for 18- through 24-year olds, 1998-2000, was 85.7 percent (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002).

Another high school completion measure is the “*regular*” *high school graduation or completion rate* (Center for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education). The data for this measure are collected by *NCES* through the CCD collection from state education agencies. This rate represents the number of students who, in a given year, complete a regular high school program and earn a diploma, stated as a percent of the number of entering freshman 4 years earlier. For example, in the 1998-1999 school year, public high schools in the U.S. awarded 2,488,605 regular high school diplomas. This number was 67.2 percent of the 3,704,455 students who began the ninth grade four years earlier in the fall of 1995 (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002, as cited in Davis & Lee, 2004).

Sometimes, researchers also utilize what is referred to as the “high school *non-completion* rate.” Very simply, the *non-completion* rate is 100% minus the completion rate. For example, if the high school completion rate in a given year were 83.4 percent, the high school non-completion rate for that year would be considered to be 16.6 percent. This rate often is used to provide a figure in the same range as the event and status dropout rates.

APPENDIX B

ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR CALCULATING STUDENT DROPOUT AND SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES

ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR CALCULATING STUDENT DROPOUT AND SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES

In recent years, several researchers have suggested alternate methods for calculating student dropout and school completion rates (e.g., Balfanz & Letgers, *Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools*, 2003; Greene & Winters, *The Manhattan Institute*, 2004; 2005; Haney, Madaus, Abrams, Wheelock, Miao, & Gruia, *The National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy*, 2004; Swanson, *Urban Institute's Education Policy Center*, 2004). These researchers argue that their calculation methods yield more accurate and reliable dropout and school completion statistics. These rates employ some of the same datasets used by the U.S. Department of Education. However, they also use different datasets as well.

While acknowledging weaknesses with their data, these researchers, nevertheless, argue that their methods produce much more reliable information with respect to the “true” numbers of students who fail to graduate from U.S. high schools each year, thus providing a more accurate measure of the “true success” of our nation’s K-12 educational system. Further, these researchers argue that their methods for calculating high school graduation rates, despite their recognized weaknesses, are preferable because they are more consistent with the *AYP graduation requirement provision of NCLB*.

Below is a “snapshot” of the most recent data available regarding both the United States and Maine student high school completion rates – utilizing different high school completion rate calculation methods. These data are provided not for the purpose of endorsing any particular method but simply to illustrate the understandable confusion that currently exists regarding these figures not only among educators and policymakers but also among the general public at large. The school completion rates compared below are for 2001, the most recent data available which allow for uniform comparisons. More recent school completion data, (e.g., 2002 data), are available and have been reported by some, but not all, groups. Following the data is a brief description of how each method is calculated.

<i>Source</i>	<i>National Status Completion Rate</i>	<i>Maine Status Completion Rate</i>
NCES	86.5%	93.6%
Manhattan Institute	70.0%	77.0%
Urban Institute	68.0%	72.1% (rank #24 out of 50 states and District of Columbia)
National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy (Boston College)	67.0%	72.0% (rank #21 out of 50 states) 70% 2000-2001
Maine Department of Education	--	87.01% (2001)

Below is a brief summary of the methods used by NCES, the Manhattan Institute, the Urban Institute, the National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy, and the Maine Department of Education. It may be helpful to refer back to Appendix A regarding data sources for NCES.

NCES – The U.S. Department of Education uses the following formula to determine completion rates:

High School Completers Year 4

$$\text{Dropout Outs (Grade 9 Year 1 + Grade 10 Year 2 + Grade 11 Year 3 + Grade 12 Year 4) + High School Completers Year 4}$$

The rates are based on CPS and CCD data, and the resulting rates have been critiqued for not accounting for changes in cohorts of students, such as student migration and grade retention. Because these rates are also based on reported dropouts, the completion statistics become inflated when dropouts are underreported (Miao & Haney, 2004). As a result, these figures have been categorized as “simple” graduation rates, and alternative methods of rate calculation have been devised that are categorized as “adjusted” graduation rates.

Manhattan Institute – The Greene Method (named after Jay Greene, policy analyst for the Manhattan Institute) uses CCD data to calculate an estimate of the graduation rate by comparing the number of students that enter a high school class to the number of students who receive a regular diploma, and adjusts for changes in the population. The values are calculated by taking high school graduates at the end of senior year as a proportion of the ninth graders three school years earlier. For example, the simple on-time graduation rate for the class of 2000 is computed by dividing the 9th grade enrollment in the fall of 1996 into the number of high school graduates in the spring of 2000 (Miao & Haney, 2004). The figure that is calculated attempts to account for changes in the original group of students from year to year.

$$GR_{\text{year}(i+4)} = \frac{N_{\text{Year}(i+4)}^{\text{Graduates}}}{N_{\text{Year}(i)}^{\text{G9}}}$$

The Urban Institute – Using a variable called the “Cumulative Promotion Index” (CPI), the Urban Institute (Swanson, 2004) utilized CCD data to calculate state and national graduation rates that resulted in lower completion rates than those commonly reported by the US Department of Education. The rate includes only recipients of high school diplomas as graduates. The CPI is calculated by schools and is based on knowing how many students were enrolled in each grade (9-12) over a two-year period. It is not longitudinal, rather, it estimates, based on grade-specific promotion ratios, the likelihood that a 9th grader will graduate high school with a regular diploma in four years, given the conditions in the school system during the year the 9th graders enter the school.

$$CPI_{2000} = \left[\frac{N_{2000}^{G10}}{N_{1999}^{G9}} \right] * \left[\frac{N_{2000}^{G11}}{N_{1999}^{G10}} \right] * \left[\frac{N_{2000}^{G12}}{N_{1999}^{G11}} \right] * \left[\frac{N_{2000}^{\text{Grad}}}{N_{1999}^{G12}} \right]$$

This formula would yield a CPI for the graduating class of 2000 by multiplying proportions of students enrolled in each grade the previous year.

National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy – Located at Boston College, the National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy discuss a calculation method devised by John Robert Warren of the University of Minnesota. This method uses CCD and CPS data; CCD data on enrollment is supplemented with CPS data to adjust for grade retention and migration. Conceptually, the rate represents “the percentage of incoming public school 9th graders in a particular state and a particular year who obtain a regular high school diploma within four or five years of starting the 9th grade” (Warren, 2003, p.12 in Haney, Madaus, Abrams, Wheelock, Miao, & Gruia, 2004).

$$GR_{\text{Year}(i+4)}^{\text{Warren}} = \frac{N_{\text{Year}(i+4)}^{\text{Grad}} - N_1 + N_2}{N_{\text{Year}(i)}^{\text{G9}} * P * (1 + MR)}$$

In this formula, the number of graduates (N Grad Year)(i + 4) and grade 9 enrollment (N G9 Year (i) are available from CCD files, while the other parameters (N1, N2, P and MR) are estimated based on CPS data (Warren, 2003). The figure is subject to error because N1, N2, P and MR are estimated from CPS data, which are influenced by various sources of error. (Miao & Haney, 2004).

Maine Department of Education – The Maine DOE calculates the high school completion rates as the percentage of students who graduate from their high school with a regular high school diploma (rather than earning an alternative credential, GED, or dropping out). The rate is calculated:

Number of regular diploma recipients in a high school class

(Number of regular diploma recipients + number of other diploma recipients +
number of all dropouts during the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade years of this
graduating class)

Note that a GED recipient is neither a regular, nor “other” diploma recipient. The completion and dropout rates are prepared annually by each SAU and submitted to the Maine DOE on forms provided by the department.

Johns Hopkins Center for the Social Organization of Schools - Balfanz & Letgers (2003) at Johns Hopkins have created a variable they call the “promoting power” of schools. Maine is one of five states in the U.S. with relatively high promoting power, which is calculated:

Number of students enrolled in grade 12

Number of 9th grades enrolled 4 years earlier

This formula uses numbers from the CCD and compares 12th grade enrollment and not the number of graduates to the number of freshman 4 years earlier is because enrollment data is available, and graduate data is not (Balfanz & Letgers, 2003). Promoting power is considered to be an indicator of the dropout problem, as weak promoting power can “signal” a high dropout rate. One disadvantage to using the promoting power figure is that 9th grade enrollment numbers may be problematic and there is often a “9th grade bulge” with high number of students in the 9th grade, but these are not all students who are in their first year of high school. Students who are repeating the 9th grade will artificially inflate the number of 9th grade enrollees and the promoting power will be lower than if 9th graders who are enrolled for the first time are used in the equation.

APPENDIX C

MAINE DROPOUT AND SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES (2004-2005)

MAINE STUDENT DROPOUT AND SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES (2004-2005)

Maine Statewide Dropout Rate
Public Schools

Year	Secondary Enrollment	Dropouts	Dropout Rate
2004-05	62,653	1,739	2.78%
2003-04	62,778	1,678	2.67%
2002-03	62,340	1,740	2.79%
2001-02	62,295	1,802	2.89%
2000-01	61,512	1,929	3.14%
1999-00	60,685	1,999	3.29%
1998-99	59,744	1,991	3.33%
1997-98	62,291	1,926	3.09%
1996-97	61,412	1,874	3.05%
1995-96	60,707	1,830	3.01%
1994-95	60,127	1,883	3.13%
1993-94	59,215	1,719	2.90%
1992-93	58,498	1,644	2.81%
1991-92	58,225	1,680	2.89%
1990-91	58,775	1,700	2.89%
1989-90	59,881	1,986	3.32%
1988-89	62,318	2,407	3.86%
1987-88	65,975	2,677	4.06%
1986-87	66,166	2,601	3.93%
1985-86	66,767	2,384	3.57%
1984-85	58,414	2,057	3.52%
1983-84	63,858	2,314	3.62%
1982-83	64,951	2,364	3.64%
1981-82	67,450	2,627	3.89%
1980-81	69,920	2,924	4.18%
1979-80	71,853	2,988	4.16%
1978-79	73,395	3,365	4.58%
1977-78	73,996	3,466	4.68%
1976-77	73,669	3,949	5.36%
1975-76	72,781	3,302	4.54%
1974-75	72,018	3,343	4.64%

Dropout rates derived from:

1974-75 to 1997-98: Secondary enrollment reported on the EF-M-35 Year End Report for School Systems/Selected Private Schools as of June 30.

Note: Data source for secondary enrollment changed in 1998-99.

Beginning 1998-99: Secondary enrollment reported on the EF-M-40 Fall School Statistical Report. Dropouts reported on the EF-M-35a Year End Report for School Systems/Selected Private Schools Part II - Dropouts.

Note: several reports were not filed for 1984-85

**2004-05 PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL DROPOUTS
TOTAL SECONDARY DROPOUTS**

Location	School Name	Secondary Enrollment	Secondary Dropouts	Dropout Rate
<i>ANDROSCOGGIN COUNTY</i>				
Auburn	Edward Little HS & Franklin Alt. & Merrill Hill Alt. & RETC/SOS	1,176	37	3.15%
Lewiston	Lewiston High School	1,354	109	8.05%
Lisbon	Lisbon High School	466	6	1.29%
Livermore Falls (SAD 36)	Livermore Falls HS	318	3	0.94%
Poland	Poland Regional HS	570	3	0.53%
Turner (SAD 52)	Leavitt Area High School	752	8	1.06%
Wales (CSD 15)	Oak Hill High School	578	25	4.33%
Total		5,214	191	3.66%
<i>AROOSTOOK COUNTY</i>				
Ashland (SAD 32)	Ashland Community HS	517	2	0.39%
Caribou	Caribou High School	595	17	2.86%
Dyer Brook (CSD 9)	So Aroostook CSD School	156	2	1.28%
Easton	Easton Jr.-Sr. H.S.	51	0	0.00%
Ft Fairfield (SAD 20)	Ft Fairfield Middle/HS	196	9	4.59%
Fort Kent (SAD 27)	Fort Kent Community HS	378	10	2.65%
Hodgdon (SAD 70)	Hodgdon High School	234	2	0.85%
Houlton (SAD 29)	Houlton High School	375	5	1.33%
Limestone	Limestone Community Sch	107	7	6.54%
Madawaska	Madawaska Middle/HS	239	2	0.84%
Mars Hill (SAD 42)	Central Aroostook JSHS	170	0	0.00%
Presque Isle (SAD 1)	Presque Isle High School	639	17	2.66%
St Agatha (SAD 33)	Wisdom Middle/HS	99	0	0.00%
Van Buren (SAD 24)	Van Buren District Sec. HS	147	3	2.04%
Washburn (SAD 45)	Washburn District HS	130	6	4.62%
TOTAL		4,033	82	2.03%
<i>CUMBERLAND COUNTY</i>				
Brunswick	Brunswick High School	1,181	20	1.69%
Cape Elizabeth	Cape Elizabeth HS	591	2	0.34%
Cumberland (SAD 51)	Greely High School	696	1	0.14%
Falmouth	Falmouth High School	596	6	1.01%
Freeport	Freeport High School	465	8	1.72%
Gorham	Gorham High School	868	14	1.61%
Gray (SAD 15)	Gray-New Gloucester HS	743	16	2.15%
Naples (SAD 61)	Lake Region High School	774	25	3.23%
Portland	Deering High School	1,286	92	7.15%
Portland	Portland High School	1,230	102	8.29%

Portland	West School	18	7	38.89%
Scarborough	Scarborough High School	979	14	1.43%
South Portland	South Portland HS	1,047	43	4.11%
Westbrook	Westbrook High School	879	33	3.75%
Windham	Windham HS & Real Sch	945	19	2.01%
Yarmouth	Yarmouth High School	490	1	0.20%

TOTAL **12,788** **403** **3.15%**

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Farmington (SAD 9)	Mount Blue High School	917	40	4.36%
Jay	Jay High School	316	5	1.58%
Rangeley	Rangeley Lakes Reg School	72	3	4.17%
Strong (SAD 58)	Mount Abram Regional HS	307	2	0.65%

TOTAL **1,612** **50** **3.10%**

HANCOCK COUNTY

Bar Harbor (CSD 7)	Mt. Desert Island HS	701	31	4.42%
Bucksport	Bucksport High School	457	7	1.53%
Deer Isle (CSD 13)	Deer Isle-Stonington JSHS	149	6	4.03%
Ellsworth	Ellsworth High School	522	26	4.98%
Sullivan (CSD 4)	Sumner Memorial HS	341	18	5.28%

TOTAL **2,170** **88** **4.06%**

KENNEBEC COUNTY

Augusta	Cony High School	924	24	2.60%
Farmingdale (SAD 16)	Hall-Dale High School	387	8	2.07%
Gardiner (SAD 11)	Gardiner Area High School	751	26	3.46%
Monmouth	Monmouth Academy	244	2	0.82%
Oakland (SAD 47)	Messalonskee High School	910	7	0.77%
Readfield (CSD 10)	Maranacook Community Sch	552	3	0.54%
Waterville	Waterville High School	668	10	1.50%
Winslow	Winslow High School	585	1	0.17%
Winthrop	Winthrop High School	343	0	0.00%

TOTAL **5,364** **81** **1.51%**

KNOX COUNTY

North Haven (SAD 7)	No Haven Community School	18	0	0.00%
Rockland (SAD 5)	Rockland District HS	481	25	5.20%
Rockport (CSD 19)	Camden Hills Regional H.S.	749	12	1.60%
Thomaston (SAD 50)	Georges Valley High School	343	4	1.17%

Vinalhaven (SAD 8)	Lincoln Elem/Vinalhaven HS	63	0	0.00%
Waldoboro (SAD 40)	Medomak Valley HS	712	26	3.65%
TOTAL		2,366	67	2.83%

LINCOLN COUNTY

B-bay Harbor (CSD 3)	Boothbay Region HS	285	5	1.75%
Wiscasset	Wiscasset High School	358	6	1.68%
TOTAL		643	11	1.71%

OXFORD COUNTY

Bethel (SAD 44)	Telstar High School	325	20	6.15%
Buckfield (SAD 39)	Buckfield Jr.-Sr. HS	195	6	3.08%
Dixfield (SAD 21)	Dirigo High School	360	9	2.50%
Hiram (SAD 55)	Sacopee Valley Jr.-Sr. HS	406	13	3.20%
Paris (SAD 17)	Oxford Hills Comp HS	1,243	25	2.01%
Rumford (SAD 43)	Mountain Valley HS	607	10	1.65%
TOTAL		3,136	83	2.65%

PENOBSCOT COUNTY

Bangor	Bangor High School	1,467	43	2.93%
Brewer	Brewer High School	900	63	7.00%
Corinth (SAD 64)	Central High School	424	4	0.94%
Dexter (SAD 46)	Dexter Regional HS	383	29	7.57%
East Millinocket	Schenck High School	213	3	1.41%
Hampden (SAD 22)	Hampden Academy	827	9	1.09%
Hermon	Hermon High School	552	26	4.71%
Howland (SAD 31)	Penobscot Valley HS	234	3	1.28%
Lincoln (SAD 67)	Mattanawcook Academy	427	0	0.00%
Millinocket	Stearns High School	278	3	1.08%
Newport (SAD 48)	Nokomis Regional HS	774	29	3.75%
Old Town	Old Town High School	728	11	1.51%
Orono	Orono High School	386	3	0.78%
Stacyville (SAD 25)	Katahdin Middle/HS	148	3	2.03%
TOTAL		7,741	229	2.96%

PISCATAQUIS COUNTY

Greenville	Greenville Middle/HS	108	1	0.93%
Guilford (SAD 4)	Piscataquis Community HS	299	16	5.35%
Milo (SAD 41)	Penquis Valley High School	295	16	5.42%
TOTAL		702	33	4.70%

SAGadahoc County

Bath	Morse High School	749	16	2.14%
Richmond	Richmond High School	185	1	0.54%
Topsham (SAD 75)	Mount Ararat High School	1,109	40	3.61%
TOTAL		2,043	57	2.79%

SOMERSET County

Anson (SAD 74)	Carrabec High School	292	6	2.05%
Bingham (SAD 13)	Upper Kennebec Vly JSHS	105	3	2.86%
Fairfield (SAD 49)	Lawrence High School	930	13	1.40%
Jackman (SAD 12)	Forest Hills Consolid Sch	68	0	0.00%
Madison (SAD 59)	Madison Area Memorial HS	309	9	2.91%
Skowhegan (SAD 54)	Skowhegan Area HS	954	29	3.04%
TOTAL		2,658	60	2.26%

WALDO County

Belfast (SAD 34)	Belfast Area High School	630	14	2.22%
Islesboro	Islesboro Central School	26	0	0.00%
Searsport (SAD 56)	Searsport District HS	279	8	2.87%
Thorndike (SAD 3)	Mount View High School	516	23	4.46%
TOTAL		1,451	45	3.10%

WASHINGTON County

Baileyville	Woodland Jr.-Sr. HS	199	6	3.02%
Calais	Calais High School	280	1	0.36%
Danforth (SAD 14)	East Grand School	62	1	1.61%
Eastport	Shead Memorial HS	158	12	7.59%
Harrington (SAD 37)	Narraguagus High School	255	3	1.18%
Jonesport (CSD 17)	Jonesport-Beals HS	87	2	2.30%
Lubec (SAD 19)	Lubec Consolidated School	49	3	6.12%
Machias	Machias Memorial HS	142	4	2.82%
TOTAL		1,232	32	2.60%

YORK County

Biddeford	Biddeford High School	940	18	1.91%
Kennebunk (SAD 71)	Kennebunk High School	875	4	0.46%
Kittery	Robert W. Traip Academy	321	6	1.87%
No Berwick (SAD 60)	Noble High School	1,128	69	6.12%
Old Orchard Beach	Old Orchard Beach HS	338	10	2.96%
Sanford	Sanford High School	1,410	30	2.13%
So Berwick (SAD 35)	Marshwood High School	853	18	2.11%
Standish (SAD 6)	Bonny Eagle High School	1,279	26	2.03%

Waterboro (SAD 57)	Massabesic High School	1,157	27	2.33%
Wells (CSD 18)	Wells High School	496	9	1.81%
York	York High School	703	10	1.42%

TOTAL 9,500 227 2.39%

STATEWIDE TOTAL - PUBLIC 62,653 1,739 2.78%

PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS (60% Publicly-Funded Students)

Bangor (Penobscot)	John Bapst Memorial HS	494	0	0.00%
Blue Hill (Hancock)	George Stevens Academy	354	13	3.67%
Blue Hill (Hancock)	Liberty School	62	3	4.84%
China (Kennebec)	Erskine Academy	767	5	0.65%
D-F (Piscataquis)	Foxcroft Academy	440	23	5.23%
E Machias (Washington)	Washington Academy	350	6	1.71%
Fryeburg (Oxford)	Fryeburg Academy	676	5	0.74%
Lee (Penobscot)	Lee Academy	219	5	2.28%
Newcastle (Lincoln)	Lincoln Academy	606	6	0.99%
Pittsfield (Somerset)	Maine Central Institute	489	13	2.66%
Saco (York)	Thornton Academy	1,184	39	3.29%

TOTAL 60% PUBLICLY FUNDED 5,641 118 2.09%

STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS

Limestone (Aroostook)	ME School of Sci and Math	91	0	0.00%
So Portland (Cumberland)	Arthur Gould Sch (ME Youth Ctr)	87	0	0.00%
Charleston (Penobscot)	Mtn View Youth Dev Ctr	69	0	0.00%

TOTAL STATE-FUNDED 247 0 0.00%

STATEWIDE TOTAL 68,541 1,857 2.71%

Secondary enrollment is reported on the EF-M-40 Fall School Statistical Report as of October 1, 2004.

Dropouts are reported on the EF-M-35a Year End Report for School Systems/Selected Private Schools Part II - 2004-05 Dropouts.

Note: Only private schools with 60% or more publicly funded students are required to file the dropout report with the Department of Education.

State of Maine
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**2004-05 PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2005 COMPLETION RATES (All)**

Location	School Name	Total Regular Diploma Recipients 2004-05	Total Other Diploma Recipients 2004-05	Total Dropouts 12th Grade 2004-05	Total Dropouts 11th Grade 2003-04	Total Dropouts 10th Grade 2002-03	Total Dropouts 9th Grade 2001-02	Class of '05 Total Completion Rate
ANDROSCOGGIN COUNTY								
Auburn	Edward Little HS & Franklin Alt.	257	0	10	36	3	6	82.37
Lewiston	Lewiston High School	222	8	47	17	16	9	69.59
Lisbon	Lisbon High School	75	0	0	3	2	9	84.27
Livermore Falls (SAD 36)	Livermore Falls High School	62	4	0	3	9	2	77.50
Poland	Poland Regional High School	113	3	1	2	0	1	94.17
Turner (SAD 52)	Leavitt Area High School	171	0	1	3	1	0	97.16
Wales (CSD 15)	Oak Hill High School	109	0	11	9	1	2	82.58
Total		1009	15	70	73	32	29	82.17
AROOSTOOK COUNTY								
Ashland (SAD 32)	Ashland Community High School	33	0	2	0	1	0	91.67
Caribou	Caribou High School	119	0	2	0	1	3	95.20
Dyer Brook (CSD 9)	Southern Aroostook CSD School	43	0	1	1	1	0	93.48
Easton	Easton Jr.-Sr. H.S.	19	0	0	0	0	0	100.00
Fort Fairfield (SAD 20)	Fort Fairfield Middle/High School	42	0	3	1	0	0	91.30
Fort Kent (SAD 27)	Fort Kent Community High School	92	0	5	2	1	0	92.00
Hodgdon (SAD 70)	Hodgdon High School	61	0	1	0	1	0	96.83
Houlton (SAD 29)	Houlton High School	64	2	1	3	2	3	85.33
Limestone	Limestone Community School	20	0	2	0	0	0	90.91
Madawaska	Madawaska Middle/High School	59	0	0	1	0	0	98.33
Mars Hill (SAD 42)	Central Aroostook Jr.-Sr. H.S.	41	0	0	0	0	0	100.00
Presque Isle (SAD 1)	Presque Isle High School	139	0	5	0	2	3	93.29

Saint Agatha (SAD 33)	Wisdom Middle/High School	24	0	0	0	1	0	96.00%
Van Buren (SAD 24)	Van Buren District Sec. H.S.	18	0	1	1	2	0	81.82%
Washburn (SAD 45)	Washburn District High School	27	0	2	0	0	0	93.10%
TOTAL		801	2	25	9	12	9	93.36%
CUMBERLAND COUNTY								
Brunswick	Brunswick High School	247	0	8	12	7	0	90.15%
Cape Elizabeth	Cape Elizabeth High School	126	0	2	0	0	0	98.44%
Cumberland (SAD 51)	Greely High School	149	0	0	1	0	0	99.33%
Falmouth	Falmouth High School	132	0	2	3	0	0	96.35%
Freeport	Freeport High School	90	0	3	1	5	3	88.24%
Gorham	Gorham High School	187	0	5	4	1	4	93.03%
	Gray-New Gloucester High School							
Gray (SAD 15)		148	0	9	5	6	1	87.57%
Naples (SAD 61)	Lake Region High School	163	0	10	2	0	1	92.61%
Portland	Deering High School	251	0	19	14	19	15	78.93%
Portland	Portland High School	255	0	19	17	32	21	74.13%
Scarborough	Scarborough High School	201	0	8	1	0	0	95.71%
South Portland	South Portland High School	215	1	11	7	13	3	86.00%
Westbrook	Westbrook High School	171	0	11	4	3	4	88.60%
	Windham High School & Real Sch							
Windham		224	0	6	7	5	1	92.18%
Yarmouth	Yarmouth High School	113	0	1	1	0	0	98.26%
TOTAL		2672	1	114	79	91	53	88.77%
FRANKLIN COUNTY								
Farmington (SAD 9)	Mount Blue High School	204	10	11	5	9	2	84.65%
Jay	Jay High School	79	0	0	0	0	1	98.75%
	Rangeley Lakes Regional School							
Rangeley		21	1	0	0	0	0	95.45%
Kingfield (SAD 58)	Mount Abram Regional H.S	62	0	2	0	5	2	87.32%
TOTAL		366	11	13	5	14	5	88.41%
HANCOCK COUNTY								
Bar Harbor (CSD 7)	Mt. Desert Island High School	136	0	20	12	6	3	76.84%
Bucksport	Bucksport High School	98	0	4	2	4	3	88.29%

Deer Isle (CSD 13)	Deer Isle-Stonington HS	25	0	1	2	1	2	80.65%
Ellsworth	Ellsworth High School	124	0	11	13	14	9	72.51%
Sullivan (CSD 4)	Sumner Memorial High School	58	2	7	4	2	13	67.44%
TOTAL		441	2	43	33	27	30	76.56%
<i>KENNEBEC COUNTY</i>								
Augusta	Cony High School	193	0	9	13	5	0	87.73%
Farmingdale (SAD 16)	Hall-Dale High School	69	2	3	5	1	0	86.25%
Gardiner (SAD 11)	Gardiner Area High School	148	0	8	9	2	5	86.05%
Monmouth	Monmouth Academy	45	0	1	1	1	0	93.75%
Oakland (SAD 47)	Messalonskee High School	204	0	2	0	2	0	98.08%
Readfield (CSD 10)	Maranacook Community HS	121	0	3	2	0	0	96.03%
Waterville	Waterville High School	130	0	2	6	2	1	92.20%
Winslow	Winslow High School	150	0	0	3	3	1	95.54%
Winthrop	Winthrop High School	78	2	0	2	0	2	92.86%
TOTAL		1138	4	28	41	16	9	92.07%
<i>KNOX COUNTY</i>								
North Haven (SAD 7)	North Haven Community School	4	0	0	0	0	0	100.00%
Rockland (SAD 5)	Rockland District High School	97	6	4	3	0	0	88.18%
Rockport (CSD 19)	Camden Hills Regional High School	153	3	8	6	4	1	87.43%
Thomaston (SAD 50)	Georges Valley High School	77	0	0	1	0	0	98.72%
Vinalhaven (SAD 8)	Vinalhaven School	12	0	0	0	0	2	85.71%
Waldoboro (SAD 40)	Medomak Valley High School	150	0	4	8	6	4	87.21%
TOTAL		493	9	16	18	10	7	89.15%
<i>LINCOLN COUNTY</i>								
Boothbay Harbor (CSD 3)	Boothbay Region High School	70	0	1	1	1	0	95.89%
Wiscasset	Wiscasset High School	85	0	5	5	2	8	80.95%
TOTAL		155	0	6	6	3	8	87.08%
<i>OXFORD COUNTY</i>								
Bethel (SAD 44)	Telstar High School	71	0	11	3	4	2	78.02%
Buckfield (SAD 39)	Buckfield Jr.-Sr. High School	42	0	5	2	1	0	84.00%

Dixfield (SAD 21)	Dirigo High School	50	0	2	12	4	1	72.46%
Hiram (SAD 55)	Sacopee Valley Jr.-Sr. H.S.	74	0	2	3	2	2	89.16%
Paris (SAD 17)	Oxford Hills Comprehensive H.S.	268	0	9	4	6	21	87.01%
Rumford (SAD 43)	Mountain Valley High School	120	0	3	6	0	9	86.96%
TOTAL		625	0	32	30	17	35	84.57%

PENOBSCOT COUNTY

Bangor	Bangor High School	272	0	13	5	16	0	88.89%
Brewer	Brewer High School	177	2	24	13	10	8	75.64%
Corinth (SAD 64)	Central High School	64	0	3	2	1	4	86.49%
Dexter (SAD 46)	Dexter Regional High School	66	4	16	5	6	5	64.71%
East Millinocket	Schenck High School	51	0	1	1	1	1	92.73%
Hampden (SAD 22)	Hampden Academy	182	0	6	1	6	4	91.46%
Hermon	Hermon High School	116	0	1	2	1	3	94.31%
Howland (SAD 31)	Penobscot Valley High School	53	0	2	0	0	0	96.36%
Lincoln (SAD 67)	Mattanawcook Academy	83	1	0	4	0	0	94.32%
Millinocket	Stearns High School	66	0	3	2	0	0	92.96%
Newport (SAD 48)	Nokomis Regional High School	136	0	17	6	4	1	82.93%
Old Town	Old Town High School	172	6	6	11	1	1	87.31%
Orono	Orono High School	77	0	1	0	0	1	97.47%
Stacyville (SAD 25)	Katahdin Middle/High School	29	3	1	2	0	1	80.56%
TOTAL		1544	16	94	54	46	29	86.60%

PISCATAQUIS COUNTY

Greenville	Greenville Middle/High School	30	0	0	0	0	1	96.77%
Guilford (SAD 4)	Piscataquis Community H.S.	50	0	9	0	3	1	79.37%
Milo (SAD 41)	Penquis Valley High School	56	5	5	2	4	11	67.47%
TOTAL		136	5	14	2	7	13	76.84%

SAGADAHOC COUNTY

Bath	Morse High School	169	0	4	6	8	10	85.79%
Richmond	Richmond High School	37	0	0	1	3	0	90.24%
Topsham (SAD 75)	Mount Ararat High School	226	0	16	8	7	5	86.26%
TOTAL		432	0	20	15	18	15	86.40%

SOMERSET COUNTY

Anson (SAD 74)	Carrabec High School	50	2	0	2	7	4	76.92%
Bingham (SAD 13)	Upper Kennebec Valley Jr.-Sr. H.S.	22	0	2	1	0	0	88.00%
Fairfield (SAD 49)	Lawrence High School	197	18	1	3	7	3	86.03%
Jackman (SAD 12)	Forest Hills Consolidated School	15	0	0	0	0	0	100.00%
Madison (SAD 59)	Madison Area Memorial H.S.	61	4	1	1	3	1	85.92%
Skowhegan (SAD 54)	Skowhegan Area High School	195	0	18	6	9	1	85.15%
TOTAL		540	24	22	13	26	9	85.17%

WALDO COUNTY

Belfast (SAD 34)	Belfast Area High School	135	0	3	11	4	5	85.44%
Islesboro	Islesboro Central School	5	0	0	0	0	0	100.00%
Searsport (SAD 56)	Searsport District High School	55	0	1	5	4	3	80.88%
Thorndike (SAD 3)	Mount View High School	108	0	11	13	2	0	80.60%
TOTAL		303	0	15	29	10	8	83.01%

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Baileysville	Woodland Jr.-Sr. High School	53	8	2	5	0	0	77.94%
Calais	Calais Middle/High School	57	0	1	0	0	2	95.00%
Danforth (SAD 14)	East Grand School	13	0	1	0	0	0	92.86%
Eastport	Shead High School	36	0	3	1	1	1	85.71%
Harrington (SAD 37)	Narraguagus High School	63	0	2	0	3	0	92.65%
Jonesport (CSD 17)	Jonesport-Beals High School	18	0	1	0	0	1	90.00%
Lubec (SAD 19)	Lubec Consolidated School	9	0	1	0	0	1	81.82%
Machias	Machias Memorial High School	33	0	0	2	2	1	86.84%
TOTAL		282	8	11	8	6	6	87.85%

YORK COUNTY

Biddeford	Biddeford High School	177	33	0	5	10	4	77.29%
Kennebunk (SAD 71)	Kennebunk High School	188	2	1	1	1	2	96.41%
North Berwick (SAD 60)	Noble High School	61	0	2	1	2	1	91.04%
Kittery	Robert W. Traip Academy	254	30	30	19	13	4	72.57%
Old Orchard Beach	Old Orchard Beach High School	63	0	0	2	2	1	92.65%
Sanford	Sanford High School	255	3	9	3	19	5	86.73%

South Berwick (SAD 35)	Marshwood High School	191	0	8	8	6	3	88.43%
Standish (SAD 6)	Bonny Eagle High School	252	0	12	2	3	0	93.68%
Waterboro (SAD 57)	Massabesic High School	222	0	9	11	6	12	85.38%
Wells (CSD 18)	Wells High School	119	0	8	2	1	0	91.54%
York	York High School	165	0	6	0	1	0	95.93%
TOTAL		1947	68	85	54	64	32	86.53%

STATEWIDE TOTAL - PUBLIC 12,884 165 608 469 399 297 86.92%

PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS (60% or more Publicly-Funded Students)

Bangor (Penobscot)	John Bapst Memorial H.S.	126	0	0	0	0	0	100.00%
Blue Hill (Hancock)	George Stevens Academy	75	0	11	2	2	3	80.65%
Blue Hill (Hancock)	Liberty School	9	1	0	3	5	1	47.37%
China (Kennebec)	Erskine Academy	177	0	1	1	2	0	97.79%
Dover-Foxcroft (Piscataquis)	Foxcroft Academy	89	5	11	6	0	2	78.76%
East Machias (Washington)	Washington Academy	74	0	1	1	2	3	91.36%
Fryeburg (Oxford)	Fryeburg Academy	158	0	1	3	0	3	95.76%
Lee (Penobscot)	Lee Academy	63	0	1	0	1	1	95.45%
Newcastle (Lincoln)	Lincoln Academy	121	0	0	2	3	3	93.80%
Pittsfield (Somerset)	Maine Central Institute	93	14	5	7	8	2	72.09%
Saco (York)	Thornton Academy	244	0	14	13	5	5	86.83%
TOTAL 60% PUBLICLY FUNDED		1,229	20	45	38	28	23	88.86%

STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS

Limestone (Aroostook)	ME School of Science and Math				Insufficient Data			
South Portland (Cumberland)	Arthur Gould School (ME Youth Ctr)	6	0	0	0	0	0	100%
Charleston (Penobscot)	Mountain View Youth Dev Ctr				Insufficient Data			
TOTAL STATE-FUNDED		6	0	0	0	0	0	100%

STATEWIDE TOTAL

14,119 185 653 507 427 320 87.1%

Notes and Sources:

Graduates are reported on the EF-M-40 Fall School Statistical Report as of October 1, 2004.

These completion rates include diploma recipients from the regular secondary school program, and completions received from other than the regular secondary program, such as special ed IEPs. They do not include adult education (GED) completions because of the problems of assigning GED recipients from adult ed centers to particular high schools.

Dropouts are reported on the EF-M-35a Year End Report for School Systems/Selected Private Schools Part II - Dropouts.

Note: Only private schools with 60% or more publicly funded students are required to file dropout reports with the Department of Education.

APPENDIX D

MAINE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES DROPOUT AND SCHOOL COMPLETION DATA (DECEMBER 1, 2005)

**Maine Department of Education – EF-S-05 Reports
December 1, 2005 Child Count
State Totals Report
By Exit Data and Age**

Exit Data	Age as of Data Collection Date																			
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Total
Graduation with Diploma	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	2	4	1	1	1	2	20	654	702	146	19	1557
Moved, Not Known to be Continuing	0	47	49	25	14	25	23	22	23	27	34	24	33	36	48	35	12	4	0	481
Exited to School Age Special Education Services	0	3	937	162	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1102
Parents Refuse Services	0	60	44	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	109
Graduation through Certificate/ Fulfillment of I.E.P. Requirement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	23	24	20	8	77
Reached Maximum Age	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	8	23
Dropped Out	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	5	13	88	149	168	95	22	4	551
Status Unknown	0	39	21	9	3	1	6	8	5	2	10	16	21	27	36	36	21	9	0	270
Exited to Regular Education	0	147	647	239	218	250	255	240	280	250	266	216	214	169	160	109	30	4	0	3694
Moved Out-of-District, Known to be Continuing	1	40	21	150	210	239	263	272	266	273	319	334	360	275	236	146	51	12	0	3468
Deceased	0	2	4	0	0	0	2	0	3	1	0	2	6	4	2	1	0	0	0	27
TOTALS	1	338	1723	592	446	516	550	545	580	557	633	598	648	601	653	1172	935	232	39	11359

Exit Data	Age Grouping as a Percentage of Total									
	Ages 3-5	% of Total	Ages 6-11	% of Total	Ages 12-17	% of Total	Ages 18-21	% of Total	Total	% of Total
Graduation with Diploma	0	0	7	.06	29	.26	1521	13.39	1557	13.71
Moved, Not Known to be Continuing	96	.85	132	1.16	202	1.78	51	.45	481	4.23
Exited to School Age Special Education Services	940	8.28	162	1.43	0	0	0	0	1102	9.7
Parents Refuse Services	104	.92	5	.04	0	0	0	0	109	.96
Graduation through Certificate/ Fulfillment of I.E.P. Requirement	0	0	0	0	2	.02	75	.66	77	.68
Reached Maximum Age	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	.2	23	.2
Dropped Out	0	0	4	.04	258	2.27	289	2.54	551	4.85
Status Unknown	60	.53	32	.28	112	.99	66	.58	270	2.38
Exited to Regular Education	794	6.99	1482	13.05	1275	11.22	143	1.26	3694	30.53
Moved Out-of-District, Known to be Continuing	62	.55	1400	12.33	1797	15.82	209	1.84	3468	30.53
Deceased	6	.05	5	.04	15	.13	1	.01	27	.24
TOTALS	2062	18.15	3229	28.43	3690	32.49	2378	20.93	11359	100

Number and Percentage of Maine Students with Disabilities, Age 14 and Older, Who Dropped Out, 2005: Total Disabilities and Rank Ordered by Individual Disability Category

Category	Leavers	Number of Students Who Dropped Out	Dropout Percentage Rate
Total Disabilities	2,396	736	31%

Emotional Disability	339	188	55%
Other Health Impairment	367	128	35%
Multiple Disabilities	275	77	28%
Specific Learning Disability	1,031	266	26%
Mental Retardation	112	28	25%
Hearing Impairment	16	4	25%
Speech/Language Impairment	188	39	21%
Traumatic Brain Injury	13	2	15%
Autism	37	2	5%

Davis, Artesani, & Lee (2005).

Number and Percentage of Maine Students with Disabilities, Age 14 and Older, Who Graduated with a Standard Diploma, 2005: Total Disabilities and Rank Ordered by Individual Disability Category

Category	Leavers	Number of Students Who Graduated with a Standard Diploma	Graduates with Diploma Rate
Total Disabilities	2,396	1,545	64%

Traumatic Brain Injury	13	11	85%
Speech/Language Impairment	188	143	76%
Hearing Impairment	16	12	75%
Autism	37	27	73%
Specific Learning Disability	1,031	743	72%
Other Health Impairment	367	228	62%
Multiple Disabilities	275	163	59%
Mental Retardation	112	65	58%
Emotional Disability	339	138	41%

Davis, Artesani, & Lee (2005).

APPENDIX E

MAINE DROPOUT AND SCHOOL COMPLETION CALCULATION METHODS

HOW MAINE CALCULATES DROPOUTS AND COMPLETERS

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR REPORTING DROPOUT STATISTICS

Report of Public/Selected Private School Systems Part II - Dropouts

2004-2005 EF-M-35a

These are the instructions for reporting dropouts on the EF-M-35a. These instructions ensure that the reported dropout data are comparable across all school districts. Dropout data is collected according to the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data (CCD) dropout definition.

The dropout definition for this report can be complicated, but every student will easily fall into any one category that defines the student as a dropout or a non-dropout.

The definition excludes from the dropout count many students who leave school and return, most transfers, and many students who leave for reasons beyond their own control.

The definition covers a twelve-month year that begins on October 1 and ends on September 30. It uses "membership" to mean students on the school's rolls on October 1, and "enrolled" to mean students actually attending (on the rolls and either present or absent).

For purposes of applying the dropout definitions, the following conditions apply:

School year is defined as the 12-month period of time beginning October 1 and ending September 30. It includes the summer following the school year.

School completer is an individual who has graduated from high school or completed some other education program that is approved by the state or school administrative unit.

State or school administrative unit approved program is one that leads to receipt of formal recognition of completion from school authorities. It may include special education programs, home-based instruction, and school-sponsored secondary (but not adult or postsecondary) programs leading to a GED or some other certification differing from the regular diploma.

Transfer to another school or program may be demonstrated through transcript requests, superintendent's agreements, withdrawal notices from parents that include assurances that the student will be enrolled elsewhere, or other documentation giving evidence of continuing elementary or secondary education.

Quick Summary

In general, a dropout is an individual who meets the following conditions, A AND B:

- A.
 - Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year; **OR**

- Was not enrolled on October 1 of the previous school year although expected to be in membership (i.e., was not reported as a dropout the year before).

AND

B.

- Has not graduated from high school or completed a state or school unit approved educational program, **AND** does not meet any of the following conditions:
 1. Transfer to another public school administrative unit, private school, or state or school unit approved educational program; **OR**
 2. Temporary school-recognized absence due to suspension or illness; **OR**
 3. Death

So what exactly constitutes dropping out?

Dropping out, in general, is viewed as "leaving school without completing a state or school administrative unit approved secondary program."

Transfers. Students who transfer to another public school administrative unit, private school, or state or school administrative unit approved educational program are not dropouts.

Non-completers. Students who fail to meet some graduation requirements, and who leave school without a diploma or alternative completion, are dropouts even if they have completed the 12th grade.

Alternative completions. Students who meet alternative completion requirements, meaning certificates of completion, certificates of attendance, or other nonstandard credentials *through a secondary program*, are not dropouts.

Adult Education programs. Students who leave high school to enroll in adult education GED preparation should be reported as dropouts. They should not be counted as dropouts if they enroll in a secondary school GED program, or if the district tracks programs in adult education GED programs and reports the students as dropouts should they fail to complete the GED program. Also, students who have received a high school equivalency by October 1 are not dropouts regardless of where they prepared for the test.

Alternative education. Students in alternative state or school administrative unit approved secondary programs that may not lead to a regular diploma are not dropouts. This includes alternative schools, prison schools, hospitals, secondary programs within Job Corps sites or local technical colleges, and other nontraditional locations, if the program is part of the elementary/secondary system.

Home schooling. Students who leave school and participate in approved home schooling are not dropouts.

Military service. Students who leave school and enlist in the military are considered dropouts.

Early graduations/college admissions. Students who transfer to postsecondary programs leading to a bachelor's or associate's degree are not dropouts.

Leaving the country. Students who leave the United States are not considered to be dropouts even if the school administrative unit cannot document their subsequent enrollment in school.

Age. Students who leave school after reaching the age beyond which the school administrative unit is no longer required to offer services, but who have not completed a state or school administrative unit-approved program (for example, an Individual Education Plan), are considered dropouts. Underage dropouts, those who leave school when they are still too young to do so legally, should be reported as dropouts if they drop out in any of grades 7-12, even if the school district considers them "truants".

Death and illness are exceptions. Students who have died, or are verified to be ill, including those who are in residential drug treatment programs, are not dropouts.

Students who leave and re-enroll are not dropouts.

A student who drops out during the school year but returns the following October 1 is not a dropout. For example:

- a student who enrolls in Grade 11 in September 2004, drops out in November 2004, but re-enrolls in January 2005 is not a dropout, if he or she is enrolled on October 1, 2005.
- a student who enrolls in Grade 11 in September 2004, drops out in March 2004, but re-enrolls in Grade 11 on October 1, 2005, is not a dropout.

How do I actually report those students who are defined as dropouts?

School-year dropouts. A student who drops out during the school year and does not return is a dropout from that year and grade. For example, a student that drops out of Grade 10 in 2004-05 and is not enrolled on October 1, 2005, is reported as 2004-05 Grade 10 dropout.

However, students who drop out during the school year, but who have obtained a completion credential by October 1 of the following school year, are not reported as dropouts.

Summer dropouts. A student who completes a school year but who is not enrolled on October 1 of the next school year (often called a summer dropout or fall no-show) is a dropout for the grade and school year for which he or she fails to report. For example, a student who completes Grade 8 in 2004-05 but is not enrolled in Grade 9 by October 1, 2005, is reported as a Grade 9 dropout for 2005-06. That student is reported on the 2005-06 EF-M-35a. This requires maintaining some information about the students across three school years.

However, a student enrolled for summer school only, who then drops out of summer school, is not counted as a dropout because the student is not in the membership for the school administrative unit during the school year.

Special Education and Ungraded dropouts should be allocated to the grade most appropriate for their age. Ex: Age 14 = Grade 9, Age 15 = Grade 10, etc.

SUMMARY OF SCHOOL LEAVER STATUS

A STUDENT WHO MEETS THE FOLLOWING CONDITION....	IS A DROPOUT?
1. Graduated or received some other recognized credential, such as a certificate of attendance or GED	No
2. Died	No
3. Gone, status is unknown	Yes
4. Only attended summer school in this school district (was not enrolled during the regular school year)	No
5. Left school after reaching age up to which school administrative unit must provide free public education	Yes
6. Moved out of the school administrative unit or out of state, and is not known to be in school	Yes
7. Moved out of the United States, even if enrollment status is unknown	No
8. Transferred to, and is in membership in:	
(a) Another public school, a private school, or a charter school	No
(b) Home schooling	No
(c) Early college (baccalaureate or associate's degree credit) admissions	No
(d) Adult education program in a post-secondary school	Yes
(e) Adult education program, school district remains responsible for student's enrollment	No
9. In an institution that is not primarily academic (U.S. military, possibly Job Corps, corrections, etc.)	
(a) Offers a secondary education program	No
(b) Does not offer a secondary education program	Yes
10. Is not in school, but known to be:	
(a) Planning to enroll late (such as for extended vacation or seasonal work demands)	No

- | | |
|---|-----|
| (b) Ill, verified as legitimate | No |
| (c) Ill, not verified as legitimate | Yes |
| | |
| (d) Long-term absence because of illness and not receiving educational services (such as in a residential drug treatment center, or severe physical or emotional illness) | No |
| 11. Absent because of disciplinary action: | |
| (a) Suspended or expelled, with option to return and suspension or expulsion period not yet over | No |
| (b) Suspended or expelled, period has expired and student has not returned | Yes |
| (c) Expelled, no option to return | Yes |
| (d) Expelled, transferred to and is in membership in another school or school administrative unit | No |
| 12. In alternative education setting (such as hospital/homebound instruction, residential special education, correctional institution, community or technical college): | |
| (a) Program administered by agency considered a special school administrative unit or extension of a regular school administrative unit | No |
| (b) Program is off-campus offering of regular school administrative unit | No |
| (c) Program not approved or administered by school administrative unit; program classified as adult education | Yes |

For more information, call Patrick Dow at (207) 624-6790
or email patrick.dow@maine.gov

DEFINITIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Regular Diploma Recipients – These are graduates who received a regular diploma during the previous school year and subsequent summer school.

Other Diploma Recipients – These are individuals who received a diploma from other than the regular school program during the previous school year and subsequent summer school.

High School Equivalency Recipients – These are individuals from the high school, age 19 years or younger, who have received a High School Equivalency Certificate during the previous school year and subsequent summer.

Other High School Completers – Individuals who have received a Certificate of Attendance or other certificate of completion in lieu of a diploma during the previous school year and subsequent summer school.

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES

The High School Completion Rate is the percentage of students that graduated from their high school with a regular diploma, rather than earning an alternative credential or dropping out of school sometime during their high school years. A separate completion rate is calculated for each graduating class, such as the "Class of 2004".

Calculation of Rate. The Class Completion Rate is calculated as follows:

Number of Regular Diploma Recipients in a High School Class

(Number of Regular Diploma Recipients + Number of Other Diploma Recipients + Number of All Dropouts during the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade years of this graduating class)

The numbers used in the above calculation are described below:

- * The *Number of Regular Diploma Recipients* in the above formula is the count of individuals who receive a regular high school diploma any other type of high school diploma, or a certificate of completion from their high school for a particular year, such as the "Class of 2004". Individuals who receive a high school equivalency certificate (GED) are *not* included in this count. This data is prepared by each school administrative unit and submitted to the Maine Department of Education on a Department form, the Fall School Statistical Report (Form # EF-M-40).
- * The *Number of Other Diploma Recipients* in the above formula is the count of individuals who receive any other type of high school diploma or alternative credential from their high school for a particular year, such as the "Class of 2004". Individuals who receive a high school equivalency certificate (GED) are *not* included in this count. This data is prepared by each school administrative unit and submitted to the Maine Department of Education on a Department form, the Fall School Statistical Report (Form # EF-M-40).
- * The *Number of Dropouts* is the count of individuals who dropped out but might otherwise have graduated with their class. This dropout count is the *sum* of four separate dropout counts:
 - number of 9th grade students who dropped out four years prior to the year in which their classmates graduated;
 - number of 10th grade students who dropped out three years prior to the year in which their classmates graduated;
 - number of 11th grade students who dropped out two years prior to the year in which their classmates graduated; and
 - number of 12th grade students who dropped out during the year in which their classmates graduated.

Each of these four dropout counts include students who dropped out during the school year, as well as students who dropped out during summer vacation.

Data Source. Both the graduation count data and the dropout data are prepared by each school administrative unit, and are submitted to the Maine Department of Education on Department forms. The graduation data is submitted on the Department's Fall School Statistical Report (EF-M-40). The dropout data is submitted to the Department on another Departmental form, the Dropout Part of the Report of Public/Selected Private School System (EF-M-35A).

Cumulative Dropout Rate. For each graduating class, its dropout rate (accumulated over four high school years), is 100% minus the graduation rate for that graduating class. For example, if a graduating class has a graduation rate of 85%, that class' dropout rate is 15%.

About this and other graduation rate calculations. There are several different methods for estimating a Completion Rate. The method used in this profile is the methodology adopted by the U.S. Department of Education and most State Departments of Education. Some of the advantages of this calculation method include the following:

- The rate is not affected by the number of students who transfer to another school unit in Maine or transfer out of state.
- By excluding the GED (The Tests of General Education Development) count, the rate explicitly describes graduation status that may be *properly* attributed to the organizations that are the focus of the School Profiles WWW Site: school administrative units and Maine's private high schools that are serving in lieu of a public high school. GED diplomas are awarded through a GED Testing Center, which is different from a traditional high school program.
- The rate does *not* use federal census data, which is affected to degree by migrations in and out of Maine. The net impact of these migrations cannot be accurately measured.

This completion rate calculation has only one weakness: dropouts, who later re-enter the local high school, can lower the graduation rate. This factor is judged to have only a minor impact.

The federal government has now adopted this definition as an authorized federal statistical reporting standard.

NOTE: *Readers should be aware that beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, Maine will utilize a different formula for calculating student high school completion rates. Clearly, the new formula could result in different findings regarding school completion and dropout statistics.*

APPENDIX F

THE STUDENT AT-RISK STATUS MODEL (SARS)

THE STUDENT AT-RISK STATUS MODEL (SARS)

Determining a Student's At-Risk Status: A Suggested Model

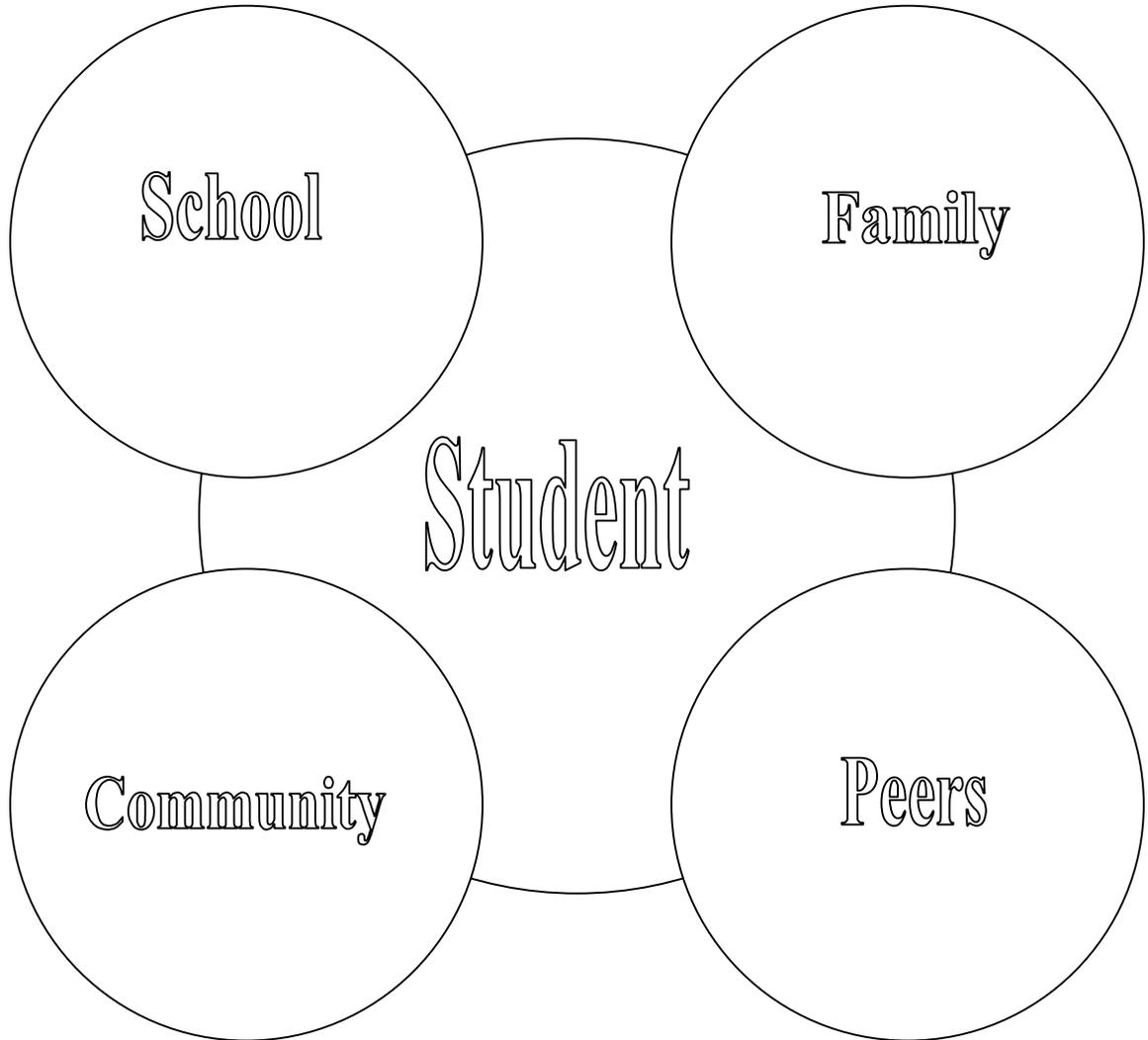


Figure 1. A student's "risk status" involves an interaction of his/her own positive and negative attributes and those of his/her family, peer group, school, and community.

**Student Protective Factors
(within student)**

- Even temperament
- High self-esteem
- Average or above average intelligence
- Social sensitivity, awareness, and skills
- Strong work ethic
- Spiritual or religious beliefs that provide support and direction
- Strong core values
- Adequate academic skills
- Motivation to succeed in school
- Positive peer interpersonal skills
- Long-term career goals
- Positive view of future
- Good health
- Good communication with parent(s)
- Involved in extra curricula and community activities
- Caring Attitude
- Possesses a sense of belonging to some individual or group

**Student Risk Factors
(within student)**

- Substance abuse
- Low self-esteem
- Low aspirations
- Mental health problems/difficulties
- Behavioral difficulties
- Victim of physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect
- Poor nutrition
- Teenage pregnancy
- Cognitive deficits
- Lack of motivation
- Exposure to violence
- Medical/physical problems
- Strong feelings of alienation/rejection
- Victim of harassment
- Engaging in unsafe sexual behaviors
- Extreme non-conformity
- Trouble with legal authorities

Figure 2. Student Protective and Risk Factors (within student).

Family Protective Factors

- Adequate income
- Adequate housing
- Consistent and clear parental expectations for child
- Good parenting skills
- Regular, quality parent communication with child
- Relative stability of housing
- Positive health and mental health of parent(s)
- Positive parent involvement in child's school
- Positive parent monitoring of child's behaviors, actions, and peer relationships
- Parental encouragement involving child's issues at school
- Caring, supportive environment

Family Risk Factors

- Low socioeconomic status (living in poverty or near poverty level)
- Racial/ethnic minority status
- Limited English or non-speaking English
- Inadequate or no permanent shelter
- Frequent mobility (frequent change in residence or schools)
- Single-parent family situation
- Inadequate or poor communication with child
- Domestic violence
- Sibling has dropped out of school
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Poor parenting skills
- Low education levels of parent(s)
- Parent stress and depression

Figure 3. Family Protective and Risk Factors.

Peer Protective Factors

- Engage in “healthy behaviors”
- Positive attitude toward school
- Positive role models
- Provide emotional and social support
- Regular school attendance
- Share similar social and recreational interests
- Provide acceptance

Peer Risk Factors

- Negative pressure
- Negative role models
- Alcohol/drug abuse
- Poor academic performance
- Behavior problems in school and community
- Gang affiliation
- High dropout rate
- High level of rejection
- Verbal and/or physical bullying

Figure 4. Peer Protective and Risk Factors.

School Protective Factors

- Provides supportive, caring environment
- Availability of adequate curriculum and instruction
- Adequate fiscal and human resources
- Encourages high student expectations
- Small class size
- Availability of social, health, and mental health support services
- Provides consistent, fair rules for student behavior
- Promotes tolerance and diversity
- Ability to ensure reasonable student safety
- Provides for high level of personalization
- Offers diversified instruction
- Availability of academic tutoring and supports

School Risk Factors

- Low academic skills and achievement, especially reading
- Retention in grade (student has been retained once or more than once during school career)
- Course failure (failed one or more courses during previous year)
- Difficulty passing “local assessments”
- Behavioral/disciplinary problems
- Poor attendance (e.g., 20 or more absences during last school year)
- Attendance at several schools within brief time frame
- Large classes/large schools
- Most students come from high poverty environment
- School located in high violence/crime community
- Inappropriate/ineffective instruction
- Incompatible values with philosophy of school, curriculum, and teaching
- Truancy
- Excessive outside work
- Two or more years older than other students in grade
- Rebellious attitude toward authority figures

Figure 5. School Protective and Risk Factors.

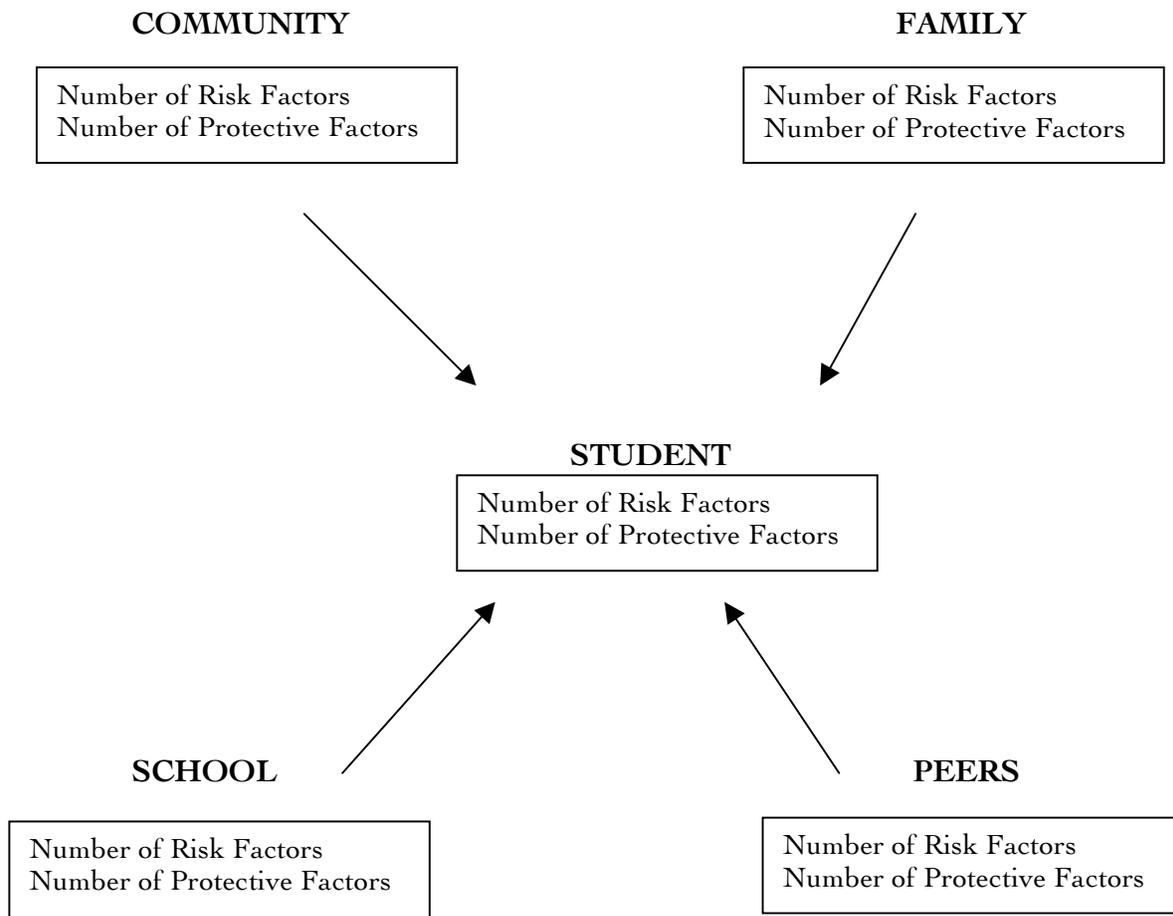
Community Protective Factors

- Provides a safe and orderly environment
- Provides adequate recreational and social opportunities for youth
- Provides adequate police protection and positive police involvement with youth
- Proactive involvement with youth
- Availability of after-school and weekend activities for youth
- Provides schools with adequate level of financial support
- Availability of adult mentors

Community Risk Factors

- Unsafe culture - excessive violence
- Inadequate or inferior housing opportunities
- Lack of recreational and social opportunities
- Lack of social, health, and mental health resources
- Excessive drugs and alcohol abuse

Figure 6. Community Protective and Risk Factors.



- ~ Protective Factors in combination decrease risk status
- ~ Risk Factors in combination increase risk status

Figure 7. Students At Risk Status (SARS) Model.

APPENDIX G

THE DROPOUT PREDICTOR SCALE (DPS)

THE DROPOUT PREDICTOR SCALE (DPS)

Cautions in Using the DPS:

The *DPS* should be viewed as a basic screening tool. When employing any student dropout predictor model, it is extremely important to keep in mind one essential caution: dropout predictor models that utilize risk factors alone have been shown to be largely ineffective with respect to predicting which students will likely drop out of school. This is especially true when these models are used at the 9-12 grade levels. When using the *DPS*, it is very important to provide “balance” to a student’s risk status by fully considering his/her protective or asset factors. The quantity and quality of a student’s protective factors could substantially alter his/her *DPS Risk Status* classification.

The *DPS* is a “work in progress.” Currently, it is being field tested within several Maine school systems. At this point in time, it should not be viewed as an empirically-based instrument. The *DPS* will be modified subsequent to further research with respect to its validity and reliability properties. The final version of the *DPS* will be available on the Institute’s web site.

The *DPS* must reflect local needs, demographics, conditions, and resources (involving student, school, family, and community factors). The *DPS* is offered as a “starting point” in an effort to address the need to identify those students who appear to be at highest risk for dropping out of school and to develop appropriate strategies, programs, and interventions to help keep these students in school and on track for a regular high school diploma. The instincts and judgments of professional educators at the local school level (especially those teachers and counselors who “know” students the best” should be given major consideration in the process of identifying students at risk for dropping out.

It is strongly recommended that the above-listed cautions be given full consideration when utilizing the DPS.

Completing, Scoring and Interpreting the DPS:

First, for each of the 15 factors, assign a numerical score and place in box. Should none of the items be checked within a specific factor, enter a zero in the box. Second, add the scores for each box and enter that number in the “Total Score” box. This number could range from zero to 40. Third, go to the “Dropout Prediction Index Scale” to determine a student’s likelihood for dropping out of school. Total Scores between 0 and 6 – “No” or “Very Minimal” Risk; 7-17 – “Mild Risk”; 18-25 – “Moderate Risk”; 26-32 – High Risk”; and 33-40 – “Very High” or “Extreme” Risk. Finally, refer to the “Major Demographic Factors” box. Should clear evidence exist that a student falls into one or more of these four categories, it could be assumed that the likelihood of this student dropping out is increased. Check (✓) all factors that apply.

1. *Academic Difficulties* (1-4) (course failure; low MEA scores; earning of few credits toward graduation; difficulty passing local assessments, etc.)

1 = evidence of mild academic difficulties

2 = evidence of moderate academic difficulties

3 = evidence of severe academic difficulties

4 = evidence of extreme and chronic academic difficulties

2. *Behavioral/Disciplinary Problems (1-4)* (frequent removals from class for disciplinary problems; excessive “disciplinary slips”; large number of detentions; suspensions; expulsions, etc.)

1 = occasional removals from class for disciplinary problems; occasional “disciplinary slips” and/or detentions, etc.

2 = frequent removals from class; numerous “disciplinary slips”, etc.

3 = numerous detentions and suspensions

4 = numerous suspensions and/or expulsions – evidence of chronic behavioral difficulties

3. *Retention in Grade (2-4)* (being held back in grade for whatever reason or reasons)

2 = retained once

4 = retained two or more times

4. *Absentecism/Truancy (1-3)* (frequent absences from school -- excused or unexcused; large number of unexcused absences; chronic truancy)

1 = frequent absences – excused or unexcused

2 = frequent unexcused absences

3 = chronic truancy

5. *Excessive Mobility (1-3)* (frequent changes in residence and/or school setting)

1 = changed residence or school once during current school year

2 = changed residence or school twice or more during current school year

3 = history of excessive mobility throughout school career and/or currently “homeless”

6. *Siblings or Friends Who Have Dropped Out* (1-2) (having one or more siblings and/or one or more close friends who have been known to drop out)

1 = one sibling or close friend who has dropped out

2 = more than one sibling or more than one close friend who have dropped out

7. *Special Education Classification* (1-3) (currently identified as a “special education student” in one of the required eligibility categories and having an active IEP)

1 = identified within any category except those listed below

2 = identified within the Learning Disability category

3 = identified within the Emotional Disability category

8. *Disengagement in Social Aspects of School* (1-2) (evidence of lack of participation in school social activities (e.g., lack of participation in sports, music, drama, clubs, extramural activities, etc.))

1 = evidence of very limited participation

2 = evidence of no participation at all

9. *Substance Abuse* (1-2) (evidence of drug/alcohol abuse)

1 = evidence to suggest the likelihood of drug/alcohol abuse

2 = evidence to suggest the likelihood of excessive drug/alcohol abuse

10. *Mental Health Problems* (1-2) (evidence of mental health issues or problems (e.g., depression, eating disorder, low self-esteem, high levels of anger and frustration, etc.))

1 = evidence to suggest the presence of mild-moderate mental health problems or disorder(s)

2 = evidence to suggest the presence of severe mental health problems or disorder(s) (e.g., requiring inpatient services in a psychiatric facility)

11. *Pregnancy/Parenting* (1-2) (pregnant or having parenting responsibilities for child)

1 = currently pregnant or having parenting responsibilities for child

2 = currently pregnant and having parenting responsibilities for child

12. *Employment* (1-2) (working after school while enrolled as a full-time student)

1 = working after school - 11-19 hours per week

2 = working after school - 20 or more hours per week

13. *Low Aspirations for Academic Success or Future Career Opportunities* (1-2) (demonstration of level of aspirations for academic success or future career success)

1 = student appears to demonstrate minimal enthusiasm for academic success (minimal engagement in academic work) or appears to have minimal aspirations for future career success

2 = student appears to demonstrate significant lack of engagement in academic work and future career options

14. *Safety Concerns* (1-2) (student has expressed concerns and fears of being verbally or physically harassed within the school environment – “not feeling safe”)

1 = evidence of reported and/or observed peer verbal or physical threats toward student

2 = evidence of chronic (several incidences) of reported and/or observed peer verbal or physical threats toward student

15. *Legal Issues* (1-2) (student involvement with police and judicial system)

1 = student has experienced minor or isolated problems with police or courts

2 = student has experienced major or chronic problems with police or juvenile court system

STUDENT TOTAL SCORE

Dropout Prediction Index Scale:

No or Minimal Risk – Total Score - 0-6

Mild Risk – Total Score - 7-17

Moderate Risk – Total Score – 18-25

High Risk – Total Score – 26-32

Very High or Extreme Risk – Total Score – 33-40

Major Demographic Factors:

Low Socioeconomic Status (e.g., eligible for free or reduced lunch) _____

Family Issues/Conditions (e.g., living in a single-parent household; low level of parent(s) educational attainment; known evidence of significant parent(s) mental health or substance abuse issues, etc.) _____

Racial/Ethnic Minority Status (member of racial/ethnic minority group, especially African American, Native American, or Hispanic) _____

Limited-English Proficiency (e.g., recent immigration, participation in ESL program, participation in migrant program, etc.) _____

Student's DPS Risk Status (Check (✓) one of the following):

No or Minimal Risk

Mild Risk

Moderate Risk

High Risk

Very High or Extreme Risk

APPENDIX H

STUDENT RISK/ASSET RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING DROPOUT POTENTIAL

Instructions: This assessment instrument will work best when used with middle school and 9th grade students. By identifying them early your interventions should have a greater impact. Have someone who knows the student complete both the Risk Factor and Asset Factor sections of the table by answering "Yes" or "No" to each statement and putting the corresponding number in the "Enter Score" column. When finished, sum each "Enter Score" column. Subtract the Asset sum from the Risk sum. Divide the remainder by 38 (total risk points). This will result in a number between -1 and +1. The higher the number, the higher the risk for dropout. Develop your intervention strategy based on both the assets and the risks.

Student Risk Factors	Answer	Answer	Enter Score	Student Asset Factors	Answer	Answer	Enter Score
Family life provides high levels of love and support.	No: 1	Yes: 0		Student and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and Student is willing to seek counsel from parent(s).	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student's parents are employed.	No: 1	Yes: 0		Student receives support from three or more non-parent adults.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student's race is other than white.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student experiences caring neighbors.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student is an English Language Learner.	No: 0	Yes: 1		School provides a caring, encouraging environment.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student is from low socio-economic background (on Free and Reduced Lunch).	No: 0	Yes: 1		Parent(s) are actively involved in helping Student succeed in school.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student's Sex	Girl: 0	Boy: 1		Student believes adults in the community value youth.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has disability.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Young people are given useful roles in the community.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has illnesses.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student does community work one + hours per week.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has negative self-perception.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.	No: 1	Yes: 0		Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the Student's whereabouts.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has low self-esteem.	No: 0	Yes: 1		School provides clear rules and consequences.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has low aspirations.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has low self-efficacy.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student feels like he/she fits in.	No: 1	Yes: 0		Student's best friends model responsible behavior.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has Alcohol/Drug problems.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Parent(s) and teachers encourage student to do well.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student is pregnant.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student is employed more than 15 hours per week.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student's age is greater than grade-level peers.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has friends or family members who dropped out.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student is motivated to do well in school.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student changes residence frequently.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student is actively engaged in learning.	No: 0	Yes: 1	

Risk Factors adapted from E. Gregory Woods "Reducing the Dropout Rate" North West Regional Educational Laboratory <http://www.nwrel.org/index.html>.

Asset Factors adapted from "The 40 Developmental Assets for adolescents" Search Institute <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/assetlists.html>.

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Student has changed schools 2 or more times.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has poor school attendance.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student cares about her or his school.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student is frequently tardy to school.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student reads for pleasure three or more hrs per week.	No: 1	Yes: 1	
Student has poor grades (below C).	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student places high value on helping other people.	No: 1	Yes: 1	
Student has a history of retention (repeating one or more grades).	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has a history of course failure.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has low credit accrual.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student "tells the truth even when it is not easy."	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has low academic engagement and little time on task.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student accepts and takes personal responsibility.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student exhibits disruptive behavior.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student believes it is important not to be sexually active.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student is frequently subject to disciplinary actions.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student knows how to plan ahead and make choices.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student is frequently suspended.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student is/was expelled.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student has negative attitudes toward school.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student considers coursework irrelevant.	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student likes school.	No: 1	Yes: 0		Student feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student gets along with teachers or other students.	No: 1	Yes: 0		Student reports having a high self-esteem.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student experiences stressful life events (death in family, etc.).	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student reports that "my life has a purpose."	No: 0	Yes: 1	
Student is pessimistic about his or her personal future	No: 0	Yes: 1		Student is optimistic about her or his personal future.	No: 0	Yes: 1	
1. Sum Risk Factors _____				2. Sum Asset Factors _____			
3. Subtract Asset Sum from Risk Sum (remainder) _____				4. Divide remainder by 38 (total possible risk points) _____			
5. Enter Quotient here: Quotient = Risk Index _____							

Risk Factors adapted from E. Gregory Woods "Reducing the Dropout Rate" North West Regional Educational Laboratory <http://www.nwrel.org/index.html>.

Asset Factors adapted from "The 40 Developmental Assets for adolescents" Search Institute <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/assetlists.html>.

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APPENDIX I

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions are suggested for use with current students and with students who are in the process of dropping out, or who may have dropped out already.

1. Do you believe the teachers in [fill in with the name of the school] really care about their students?
 2. Do you believe that teachers [fill in with the name of the school] hold high expectations for all students?
 3. Did you participate in an orientation [may require elaboration] prior to coming to [fill in with the name of the school]?
 4. Do you feel safe at [fill in with the name of the school]?
 5. Do your parents help you with homework or school assignments?
 6. Do the teachers and students create a community that gets along in [fill in with the name of the school]?
 7. Is [fill in with the name of the school] meeting your learning needs?
 8. Is [fill in with the name of the school] meeting your social needs?
 9. Do you want to drop out of school?
 - 9a. If 9 is yes: Would you consider staying in school if there were alternative programs available?
 10. Do you have a job? If so, how many hours do you work a week? _____
 11. What are the best aspects of [fill in with the name of the school] that you like most?
 12. What needs to be improved at [fill in with the name of the school]?
- For dropouts:
13. What could [fill in with the name of the school] have done to keep you in school?
 14. What could you have done to keep yourself in school?
 15. Who could have helped you stay in school?

(Barr e³ Parrett, 2001)

APPENDIX J

STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions are suggested for use with current staff. Additional materials for completion by staff, students, and teachers are available on our web site at www.umaine.edu/issar/. The questions below are excerpts of larger and more in-depth questionnaires. Please see our web site and the source materials for reference to the complete surveys.

Did you choose to work in the program?

Do the teachers and students form a positive learning community?

Does the staff participate in democratic decision-making? Is this important to you?

What are the opportunities for staff development that you see as useful?

To what extent do you feel a sense of community among the staff?

To what extent do you feel a sense of community in the school?

How comfortable are you approaching the administration with new ideas?

How extensive is the dropout problem?

Have you noticed patterns of dropout in your school community?

Has a student ever spoken with you about wanting to dropout?

(Barr & Parrett, 2001; Phillips & Wagner, 2005)

APPENDIX K

SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC AND DISTRICT DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

<p>Instructions: Hand out copies of this self-assessment to several people, ideally a group that includes curriculum-instruction coordinators, student assistance team members, elementary, middle and high school teachers, guidance counselors, and special education teachers. Ten people should give you a good sample. Ask them to rate each statement honestly, using the numbering system in the top row at the right. Ask them NOT to discuss the statements with other people and to take notes as needed. Set a deadline for completion. Assemble the group and debrief them, getting their opinion on each statement. If possible discuss each statement until the group reaches consensus. Review the consensus numbers. Begin improving your program by working on those areas where the consensus score is 2 or less. Start with the easy ones to build confidence.</p>	<p>Has not been identified or acted on. - 0 Point -</p>	<p>Identified and program developed. - 1 Point -</p>	<p>Program needs improvement based on evaluation results - 2 Points -</p>	<p>Meets requirements; evaluation shows some evidence of effectiveness and results - 3 Points -</p>	<p>Exceeds requirements; program has proven track record of reducing dropouts - 4 Points -</p>
1. School identifies, targets, and monitors students at-risk for dropout in elementary, middle school and high school, and continues monitoring their progress as they move through high school.					
2. School establishes high individualized expectations for targeted at-risk students					
3. School enrolls targeted students at risk for dropping out in a planned individualized program or activities of academic vocational and/or study.					
4. School provides direct, individualized tutoring and support to targeted students.					
5. School uses research-based instructional strategies to teach targeted students.					
6. School provides counseling and support groups for targeted students.					
7. School has implemented specific activities, strategies to address attendance and/or tardiness of targeted students.					
8. School focuses on expanding targeted students' personal views of their career and education potential and opportunities.					
9. School uses an interdisciplinary team of vocational, academic, and support personnel to plan and monitor curriculum of targeted students and to provide extra instructional support to targeted students.					
10. School implements a program of personal attention and needed instructional support to targeted students.					
11. School involves business and community leaders in retaining students in school and advancing basic competencies of targeted students.					
12. School actively involves parents of targeted students in their child's education.					
13. School assesses the relevance of all educational programs and activities to students' current and longer-term social and economic interests.					
14. Student surveys report a positive school climate and positive relationships					
15. School recognizes and rewards efforts of high risk students for improving attendance, on-task behavior, and school work.					
16. School seeks feedback and evaluative data on effectiveness and outcomes of activities for targeted students.					

Instructions: Hand out copies of this self-assessment to several people, ideally a group that includes curriculum/instruction coordinators, student assistance team members, middle school and high school teachers, guidance counselors, special education folks.. Ask them to rate each statement honestly, using the numbering system in the top row. Ask them NOT to discuss the statements with other people and to take notes as needed. Set a deadline for completion. Assemble the group and debrief them on each statement. If possible discuss each statement until the group reaches consensus. Review the consensus numbers. Begin working on those areas where the consensus score is 2 or less. Start with the easy ones.

Maine Department of Education <u>District</u> Dropout Prevention Rubric	Has not been identified or acted on. - 0 Points -	Identified and program developed. - 1 Point -	Program needs improvement based on evaluation results - 2 Points -	Meets requirements; evaluation shows some evidence of effectiveness and results - 3 Points -	Exceeds requirements; program has proven track record of reducing dropouts - 4 Points -
1. Preventing school dropouts a district-wide concern/priority. Focus is on changing schools/programs rather than individual students.					
2. District identifies students at-risk for dropping out in preschool, elementary, and/or middle school.					
3. District intervenes in preschool, elementary and middle school to prevent students from dropping out..					
4. District maintains continuity of effort around dropout prevention activities.					
5. District sets and communicates high expectations so that all students attend school and graduate.					
6. District provides ongoing professional development on working with at-risk students and preventing dropouts.					
7. District trains staff in methods for identifying students at-risk of dropping out in elementary, middle, and high school					
8. District provides a broad range of instructional programs/activities to accommodate students with different needs.					
9. District specifically works with families, and community organizations to develop a					

Maine Department of Education <u>District Dropout Prevention Rubric</u>	Has not been identified or acted on. - 0 Points -	Identified and program developed. - 1 Point -	Program needs improvement based on evaluation results - 2 Points -	Meets requirements; evaluation shows some evidence of effectiveness and results - 3 Points -	Exceeds requirements; program has proven track record of reducing dropouts - 4 Points -
collaborative program for dropout prevention.					
10. District encourages and supports programs/activities that motivate parents to participate at all levels of their children's education.					
11. District establishes strong permanent alternative programs as part of a comprehensive strategy of dropout prevention.					
12. District alternative school/programs receive resources commensurate with the tasks they undertake and the success they demonstrate.					
13. District develops and implements data collection system on student dropouts and students at-risk and uses it to identify student groups at risk, set policy and fund programs.					
14. District uses a team approach for working with at-risk youth.					
15. District has developed and implemented model programs based on research with parents, teachers, business, government, and community participation.					
16. District provides extended opportunities for at-risk students (e.g., before and after school, and summer programs).					
17. District conducts broad-based needs assessment and planning efforts that include parents, students, businesses, and social agencies working with youth and community organizations, as well as teachers and school administrators.					
18. District provides dropout prevention activities for all levels, K-12, with an emphasis					

<p>Maine Department of Education <u>District Dropout Prevention Rubric</u></p>	<p>Has not been identified or acted on. - 0 Points -</p>	<p>Identified and program developed. - 1 Point -</p>	<p>Program needs improvement based on evaluation results - 2 Points -</p>	<p>Meets requirements; evaluation shows some evidence of effectiveness and results - 3 Points -</p>	<p>Exceeds requirements; program has proven track record of reducing dropouts - 4 Points -</p>
<p>on early intervention.</p>					
<p>19. District annually reviews, and revises as necessary, organizational variables, policies and procedures affecting the school's ability to meet the needs of high-risk youth – such as student-teacher ratios, discipline policies and procedures, absenteeism, truancy, suspension, failing grades, and retention policies.</p>					
<p>20. District developed networks to create linkages across community groups. The dropout problem is a community, business, economic and social problem.</p>					
<p>21. District collects ongoing feedback and evaluation on effectiveness and results of dropout prevention programs and activities.</p>					
<p>22. District uses feedback and evaluation to make adjustments in dropout prevention programs and activities.</p>					

APPENDIX L

INTERNET AND PRINT RESOURCES

INTERNET AND PRINT RESOURCES

Following is a *selected list* of internet and print resources that involve student dropouts, dropout prevention, and at-risk students. The web site listings may be especially useful as most of them contain links to other valuable sources of information related to student dropout prevention issues and concerns. Both national and Maine resources are included.

NATIONAL

I. Websites

Alternative Education Resource Organization

<http://www.edrev.org/>

Alternative Schools Research Project - The University of Minnesota

<http://ici.umn.edu/alternativeschools/>

American School Counselor Association (Statement on at-risk students)

<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=258>

Americans for the Arts – Youth ARTS

<http://www.americansforthearts.org/youtharts/about/>

Bully Free

<http://www.bullyfree.com>

Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk

<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/>

The Civil Rights Project - Harvard University

<http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/>

Fair Test: The National Center for Fair and Open Testing

<http://www.fairtest.org>

Focus Adolescent Services (Dropout resources and helpful information)

<http://www.focusas.com/Dropouts.html>

Harvard Education Letter (Articles on a variety of topics in education)

<http://www.edletter.org>

The International Association of Learning Alternatives (IALA)

<http://www.learningalternatives.net/>

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/>

National Center for Education Statistics (Dropout data)

www.nces.ed.gov/ccd/pub_dropouts.asp

National Dropout Prevention Centers - Clemson University
<http://www.dropoutprevention.org>

National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/At-Risk/index.html>

The Schargel Consulting Group (author)
<http://www.schargel.com/scg/>

Teen Screen Program - Columbia University
<http://www.teenscreen.org/>

U.S. Department of Education
<http://www.ed.gov/>

UCLA School Mental Health Project – Center for Mental Health in Schools
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

II. Articles/Reports

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III. Books

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MAINE

I. Web Sites

Alternative Education Association of Maine
<http://aeamaine.org/>

Career and Technical Education (CTE)
www.state.me.us/education/it/index.shtml

Career Center – The Maine Employment Resource
<http://www.mainecareercenter.com>

Focus Adolescent Services (Help for teens in Maine)
<http://www.focusas.com/Maine.html>

Institute for the Study of Students At Risk (Maine data and resources)
<http://www.umaine.edu/issar/>

Job Corps Maine
<http://jobcorps.doleta.gov/centers/me.cfm>

Jobs for Maine's Graduates (Dropout prevention and school-to-work assistance)
<http://www.jmg.org/>

Kids Consortium (Service learning resource in Maine)
<http://www.kidsconsortium.org/>

Maine Department of Education
www.state.me.us/education

Maine Department of Education Office of Truancy, Dropout, Alternative Education, School Counselors and Reintegration of Youth from Correctional Facilities
<http://www.maine.gov/education/tdae/>

Maine Mentoring Project
<http://www.mainementoring.org/>

Maine Office of Substance Abuse
<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/bds/osa/>

Maine Student Assistance Team Unit
<http://www.maine.gov/education/sat/>

Service Learning in Maine
<http://www.state.me.us/education/lisa/homepage.htm>

Youth and Family Services (Support for teens and families in Maine)
<http://www.yfsinc.org/>

II. Reports (Institute for the Study of Students At Risk)

Analysis of Maine's most recent students with disabilities school completion and dropout rates. (Davis, Artesani, & Lee, 2005)

Students At Risk: Analysis of Major Issues Involving Identification, Effective Programming, and Dropout Prevention Strategies. (Davis, 2004)

Improving the Graduation Rate for Maine Students with An Emphasis on Students with Disabilities: Dropout Prevention Strategies. (Davis & Lee, 2004)

An Analysis of the Current Status of Student Dropout Prevention Programs and Strategies in Maine Public Schools. (Davis, Lee, & Davis, 2004)

An Analysis of Training and Staff Development Needs For Current and Future Alternative Educators in Maine. (Davis & Lee, 2003)

Alternative Education Programs in Maine: A Further Investigation of Their Impact Upon Serving Students Considered To Be "At Risk" and Students with Disabilities. (Davis, Brutsaert-Durant, & Lee, 2002)

Current Status of Alternative Education Programs in Maine: Impact Upon Policies and Practices for Students with Disabilities and Students Considered To Be "At Risk." (Davis, Brutsaert-Durant, & Lee, 2001)