



New York State Education Department
Office of Special Education
Educational Partnership





Evidence-Based Practices for Improving Graduation and Dropout Rates



Produced by the Technical Assistance Partnership (TAP) for Data and the Technical Assistance Partnership for Transition at Cornell University.

Last updated on October 2, 2023



New York State Education Department
Office of Special Education
Educational Partnership

Disclaimer

The resources shown are designed to provide helpful information. Resources are provided for instructional use purposes only and do not constitute NYSED endorsement of any vendor, author, or other sources. To the best of our knowledge, the resources provided are true and complete.



Introductions



- Name
- Educational Organization (EO)
- Position

Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities

-  **Self-Advocacy**
Students engage in self-advocacy and are involved in determining their own educational goals and plan.
-  **Family Partnership**
Parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child.
-  **Specially-Designed Instruction**
Teachers design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.
-  **Research-Based Instruction**
Teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities.
-  **Multi-Tiered Support**
Schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support.
-  **Inclusive Activities**
Schools provide high-quality inclusive programs and activities.
-  **Transition Support**
Schools provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.

Meeting Norms

- Take care of your needs (water, food, restroom, etc.)
- Speak your truth; use “I” statements
- Ask what you need to understand and contribute
- Listen with respect
- Push your growing edge
- Participate and struggle together
- Expect a lack of closure
- Respect each other's needs

Training Objectives

Participants will:

- Compare and contrast national, state, and local school completion data
- Identify and interpret disaggregated school completion data with an equity lens
- Identify and explore tools and strategies to address local school completion rates

Materials

- Common Acronyms
- Participant Workbook
- State Performance Plan (SPP) 1: Graduation Rate
- Verification Report (VR)-10 Sample Report
- SPP 2: Dropout Rate
- National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) Risk Calculator Users Guide
- Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Educator's Practice Guide: Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools
- NTACT:C School Completion Toolkit
- National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC): Reentry Programs for Out-of-School Youth with Disabilities

Definitions

The federal definitions:

- **SPP Indicator 1: Graduation (results indicator):** Percent of youth with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) exiting special education due to graduating with a regular high school diploma.
- **SPP Indicator 2: Dropout (results indicator):** Percent of youth with IEPs who exited special education due to dropping out.

New York State (NYS): Graduates include students who received a local diploma or a local diploma with Regents endorsement (Regents diploma). All students who received a Regents diploma (with or without Advanced Designation or Career and Technical Education (CTE) Endorsement) are included in the number of students with Regents diploma.

Assumption Activity



Take a few minutes and reflect:

- **What do you think dropout “looks like” in your local context?**
 - Who drops out in your district?
 - When do your students most often drop out (e.g., a particular grade level, at a certain age)?
- **Why do you think students fail to graduate in your schools?**
 - Are there common barriers to graduation that your students experience?
 - Are there school-related events that can trigger students to leave school?
- **How do you know? What “evidence” do you have regarding:**
 - How many students are dropping out for each sub-group?
 - Why students drop out?

High Risk Subgroups for School Completion

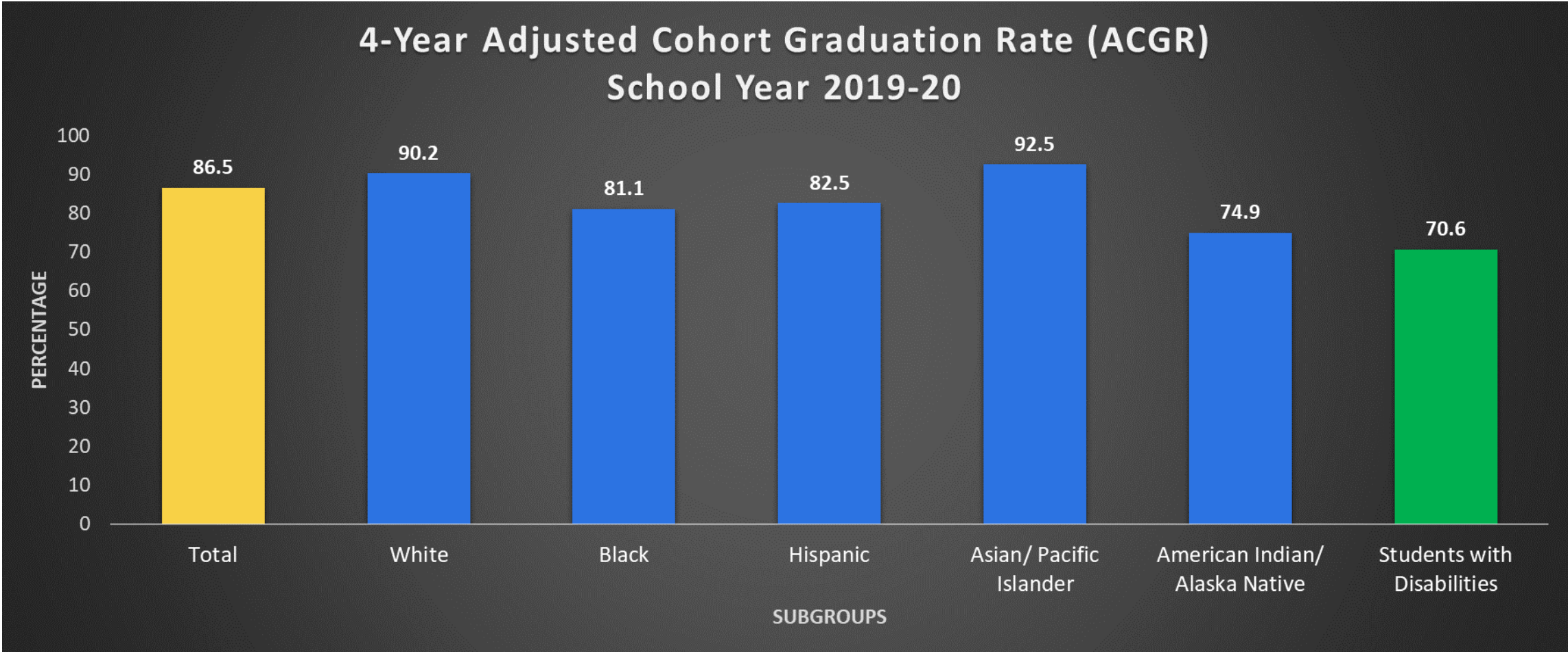
- Institutionalized youth (people in adult and juvenile correctional facilities, nursing facilities, and other healthcare facilities) are over 6x more likely to drop out.
- The national school completion rate for students in foster care is 50%.
- The 2022 NYS school completion rates for students who are:
 - Economically Disadvantaged is 82%
 - Students with Disabilities is 69%
 - English Language Learners is 65%
 - In Foster Care is 51%
 - Homeless is 70%
 - Migrant is 54%

Graduation

National and State Data
and Requirements

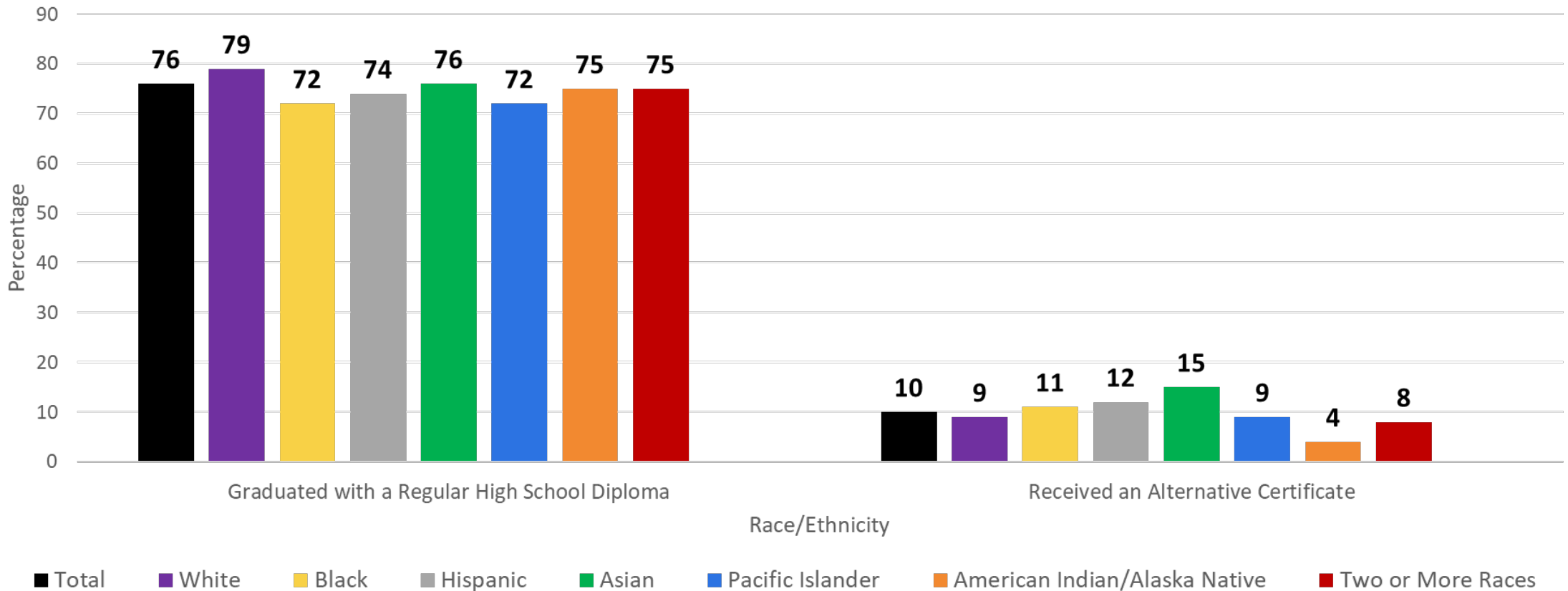


United States Graduation Rates



Students Ages 14-21 Under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Who Exited School

Percentage Who Exited for Selected Reasons by Race/Ethnicity 2019-20



NYS Graduation Calculation

For Students with Disabilities

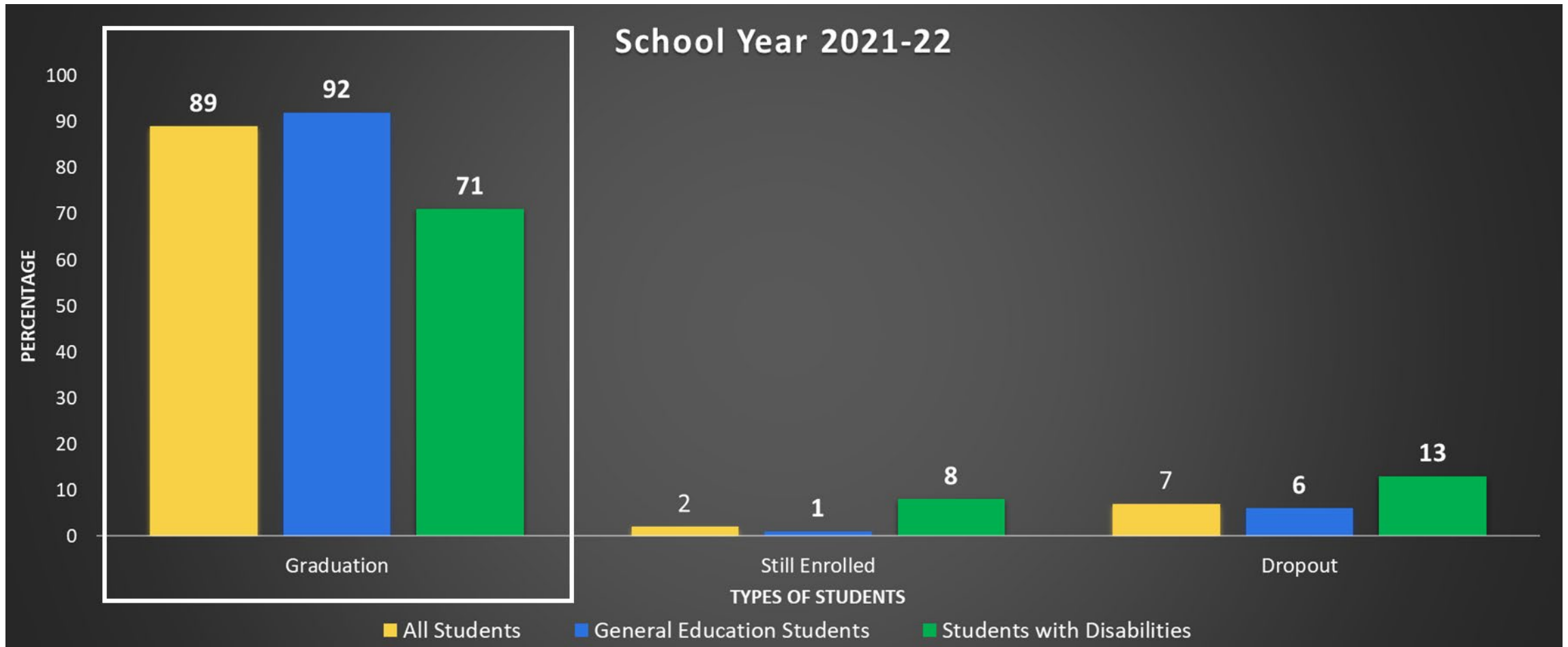


Number of youth with IEPs (ages 14-21) who exited special education due to graduating with a regular high school diploma

Number of all youth with IEPs (ages 14-21) who exited high school

x 100

NYS Graduation Rate Data



NYS Graduation Credit Requirements

This table shows the number of credits required for each subject.

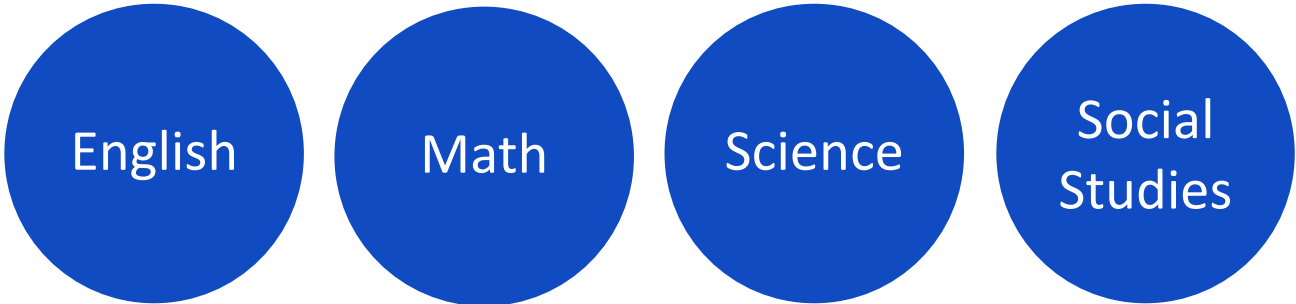
It's important to note that, in most subjects, students choose the courses they want to take to meet the minimum requirements.

	Minimum number of credits
English	4
Social Studies <i>Distributed as follows:</i> <i>U.S. History (1)</i> <i>Global History and Geography (2)</i> <i>Participation in Government (½)</i> <i>Economics (½)</i>	4
Science <i>Distributed as follows:</i> <i>Life Science (1)</i> <i>Physical Science (1)</i> <i>Life Science or Physical Science (1)</i>	3
Mathematics	3
World Languages	1 ^(**)
Visual Art, Music, Dance, and/or Theater	1
Physical Education <i>(participation each semester)</i>	2
Health	½
Electives	3 ½
Total	22

Multiple (+1) Pathways

4

All students must pass 4 required assessments (one in each discipline)



+1

Pathways

Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM)

Humanities

Arts

World Languages

CTE

Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS)

Civics

Types of Diplomas

Local

22 units of credit

Used appeals and/or safety nets to meet assessment requirements

- **or** Superintendent Determination of a Local Diploma

Regents

22 units of credit

Earned passing scores (65+ for Regents Examinations)* on all required assessments (4 + 1)

Regents With Advanced Designation

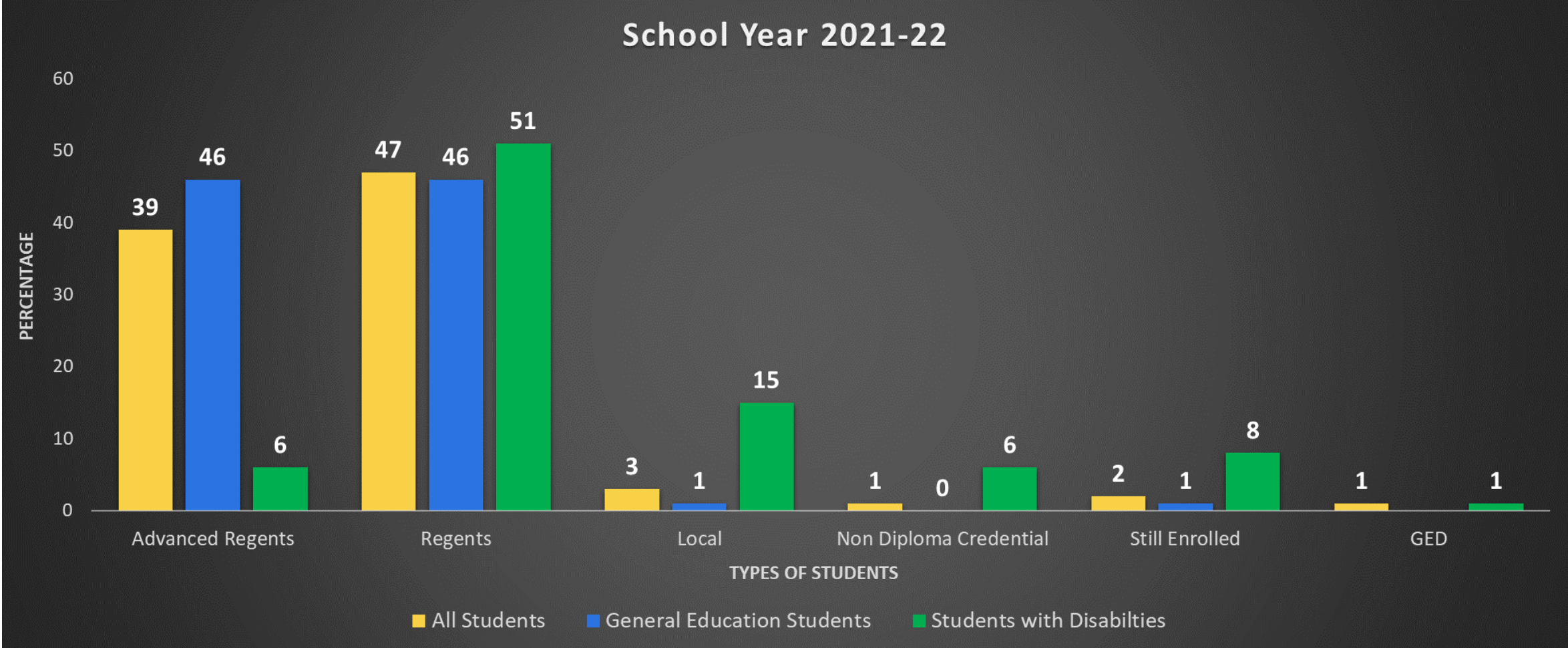
22 units of credit

Earned passing scores on all required assessments (7 + 1)

- Additional exams required:
 - +2 math
 - +1 science
 - 1 life, 1 physical
- Completed a sequence

* A student can use one traditional appeal (60–64) and still receive a Regents diploma. Special appeals and exemptions can be applied to any diploma type.

NYS Diploma Types Data



NYS Graduation Pathway Data 2021-22

Pathways	All Students	General Education Students	Students with Disabilities
Humanities	94%	94%	94%
Humanities Alternative	0%	0%	0%
Arts	0%	0%	0%
CTE	1%	1%	2%
Math	1%	1%	1%
Science	2%	2%	1%
CDOS	0%	0%	1%
Languages Other Than English (now called World Languages)	0%	0%	0%

Disaggregating NYS Data

Note that the NYS School Report Card site does not give the same data results as SPP 1 calculations for students with disabilities.

Filter this data

Gender

Female

Male

Non-binary

Ethnicity

American Indian or Alaska Native

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino

Asian or Native Hawaiian...

White

Multiracial

District Needs

NYC

Buffalo, Rochester, Yonkers, Syracuse

Urban-Suburban High Needs

Rural High Needs

Average Needs

Low Needs

Charters

Cohort Groups

2018 4-year August Cohort

2018 4-year June Cohort

2017 5-year August Cohort

2017 5-year June Cohort

2016 6-year August Cohort

2016 6-year June Cohort

Filter

Clear

Other Groups

Non-English Language Learner

Not Economically Disadvantaged

Parent Not in Armed Forces

Not Homeless

English Language Learner

Economically Disadvantaged

Parent in Armed Forces

Homeless

General Education Students

Not Migrant

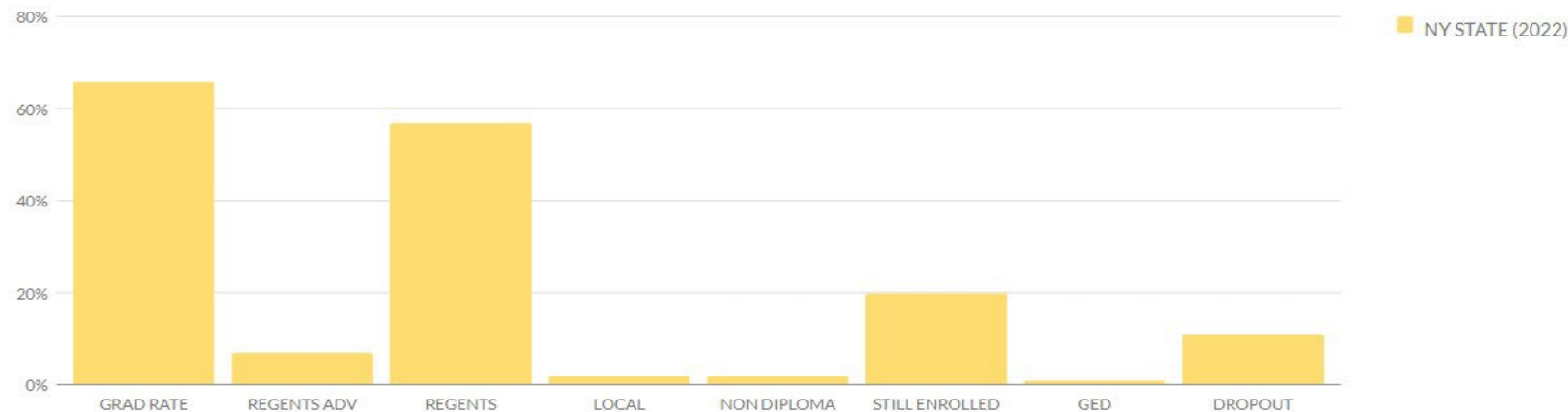
Not in Foster Care

In Foster Care

Students with Disabilities

Migrant

These data are filtered by: Students with Disabilities, ETHNICITY (Multiracial)



Exploring Regional Data

Looking at County and District Level Data

- High school graduation rate and pathway data is also available at the county and district level; this information can be accessed and filtered at data.nysed.gov.
- Go to "Counties" or "Districts" in the top tab and choose the county or school district you are interested in.
- Once you pick the county or district, you can choose the year and below "School Data," choose High School Graduation Rate, or High School Graduation Pathways Data.

County Level Disaggregated Data

Population	County A Graduation Rate	County A Drop-Out Rate	County B Graduation Rate	County B Drop-Out Rate	County C Graduation Rate	County C Drop-Out Rate
All Students						
Students with Disabilities						
Black or African/American						
Hispanic or Latino						
White						
Economically Disadvantaged						
English Language Learner						

Viewing Regional Data With an Equity Lens



Consider:

- Who benefits from viewing and receiving data?
- What historical, social, cultural, political, organizational, or contextual information shapes the context in which graduation and pathway data are reviewed?
- How will the data be shared with others in a way that fosters shared ownership and collective responsibility?

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Data Security

When working with data, we must always be mindful of protecting the privacy of a student's education records.

- Data security relates to the protection of **personally identifiable information** (PII)
 - Direct PII (name or school ID numbers)
 - Indirect (birth date or demographics)

Dropout

Overview of Dropout Rates and Who Drops Out



What Is Dropout?

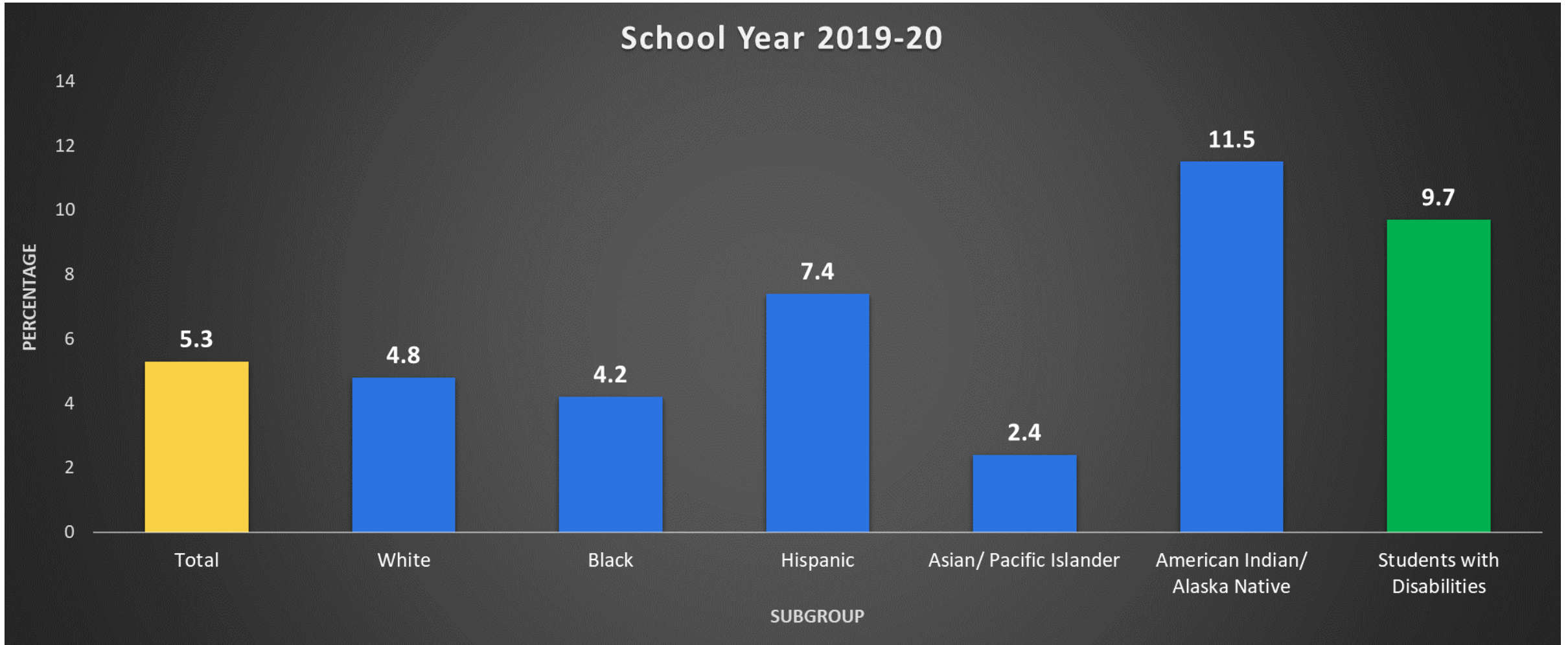
- Dropout is not a simple problem with a simple solution.
- Dropout is not a single moment in a child's life.
- Attendance, behavior, and course proficiency are key to identifying the risk of dropping out.
- Monitoring certain indicators can help a school identify youth who are at risk of dropping out in the short term and the long term and can be used to inform an individual student's IEP.

US Dropout Data

US Dropout Rates For Students	Data
Without disabilities	4.7%
With disabilities	10.7%
Who missed too many school days	43.5%
From low-income families	11%
From middle-lower income families	9%
From middle-upper income families	5%
From high income families	3%
Who are male*	6%
Who are female*	4.2%

*The article did not provide data for non-binary students

United States Dropout Rates



NYS Dropout Calculation

For Students with Disabilities

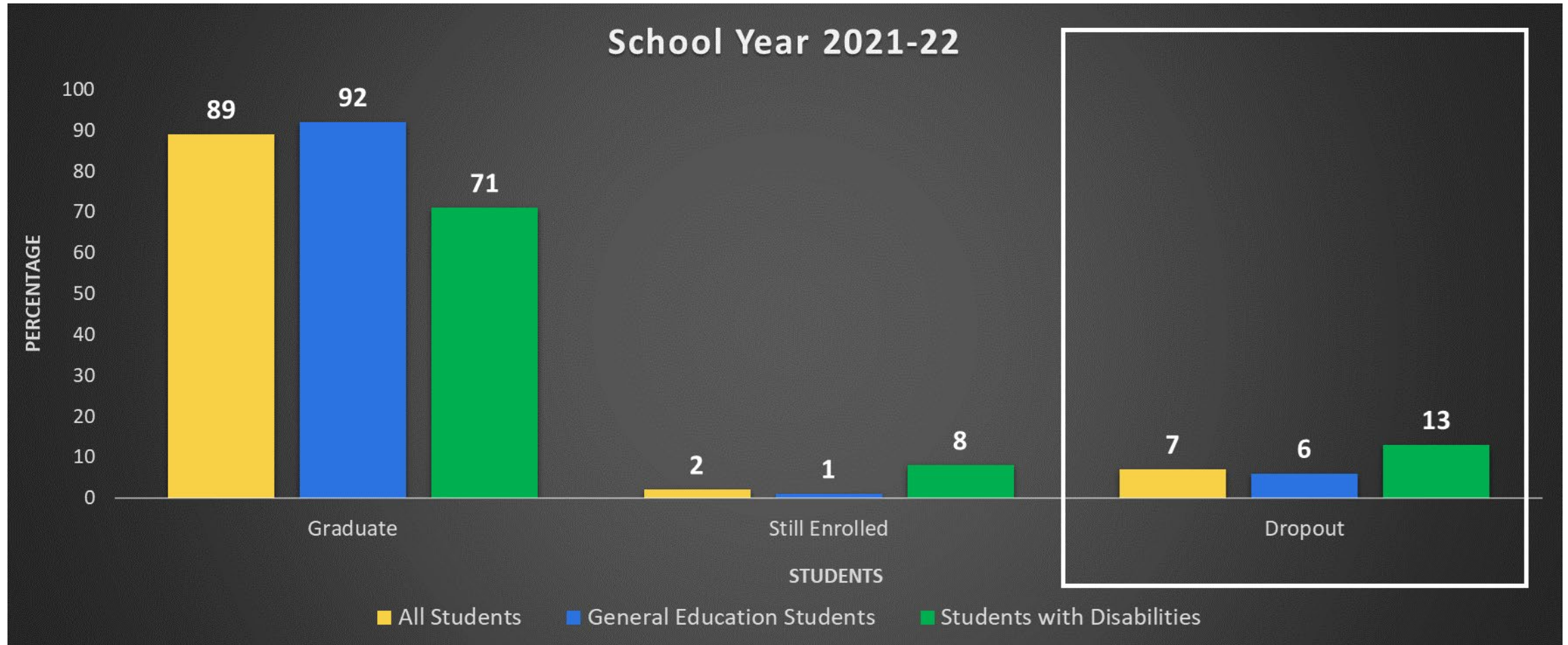


Number of youth with IEPs (ages 14-21) who exited special education due to dropping out

Number of all youth with IEPs (ages 14-21) who exited high school

x 100

NYS Graduation Rate Data 2021-22

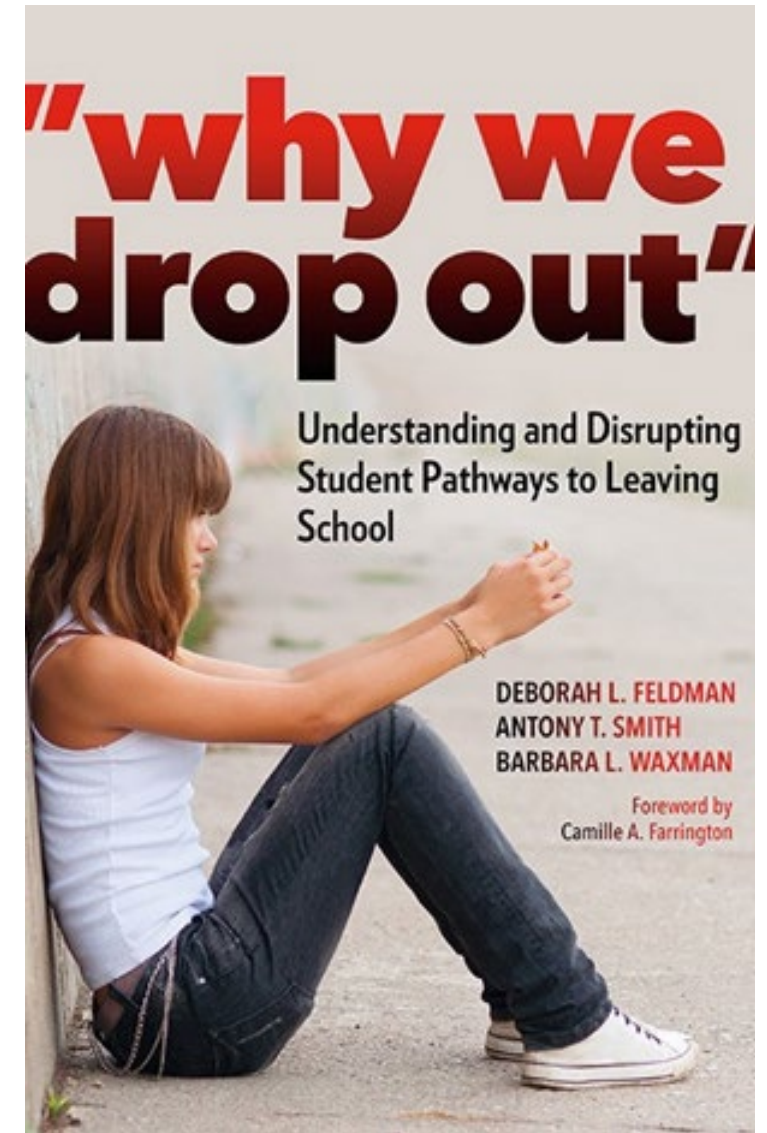


Profile of a Dropout

The authors of this 2017 book interviewed a diverse group of more than 50 youth ages 16–22 who had dropped out before graduating from high school.

These in-depth interviews focused on the youths' perspectives on their school experiences and how these experiences may have influenced their disengagement and dropping out process.

What do you think they found?



Question 1


Almost **all** youth interviewed:

- a. Had a bad experience in elementary school
- b. Were bullied in elementary school
- c. Had positive relationships with their elementary teachers
- d. Had thoughts of quitting school in elementary grades



Question 1 – Answer

Almost **all** youth interviewed:

- a. Had a bad experience in elementary school
- b. Were bullied in elementary school
-  Had positive relationships with their elementary teachers
- d. Had thoughts of quitting school in elementary grades



Question 2

What subject dominated youths' conversations about their academic experiences after elementary school?

- a. Language Arts
- b. Math
- c. Science
- d. Social Studies



Question 2 – Answer

What subject dominated youths' conversations about their academic experiences after elementary school?

a. Language Arts

 Math

c. Science

d. Social Studies



Question 3


Almost ALL youth interviewed said they experienced early disengagement because:

- a. They had a negative view of their academic capabilities
- b. The other students made fun of them
- c. The teacher(s) made them feel stupid
- d. They were always in trouble for bad behavior



Question 3 - Answer

Almost ALL youth interviewed said they experienced early disengagement because:

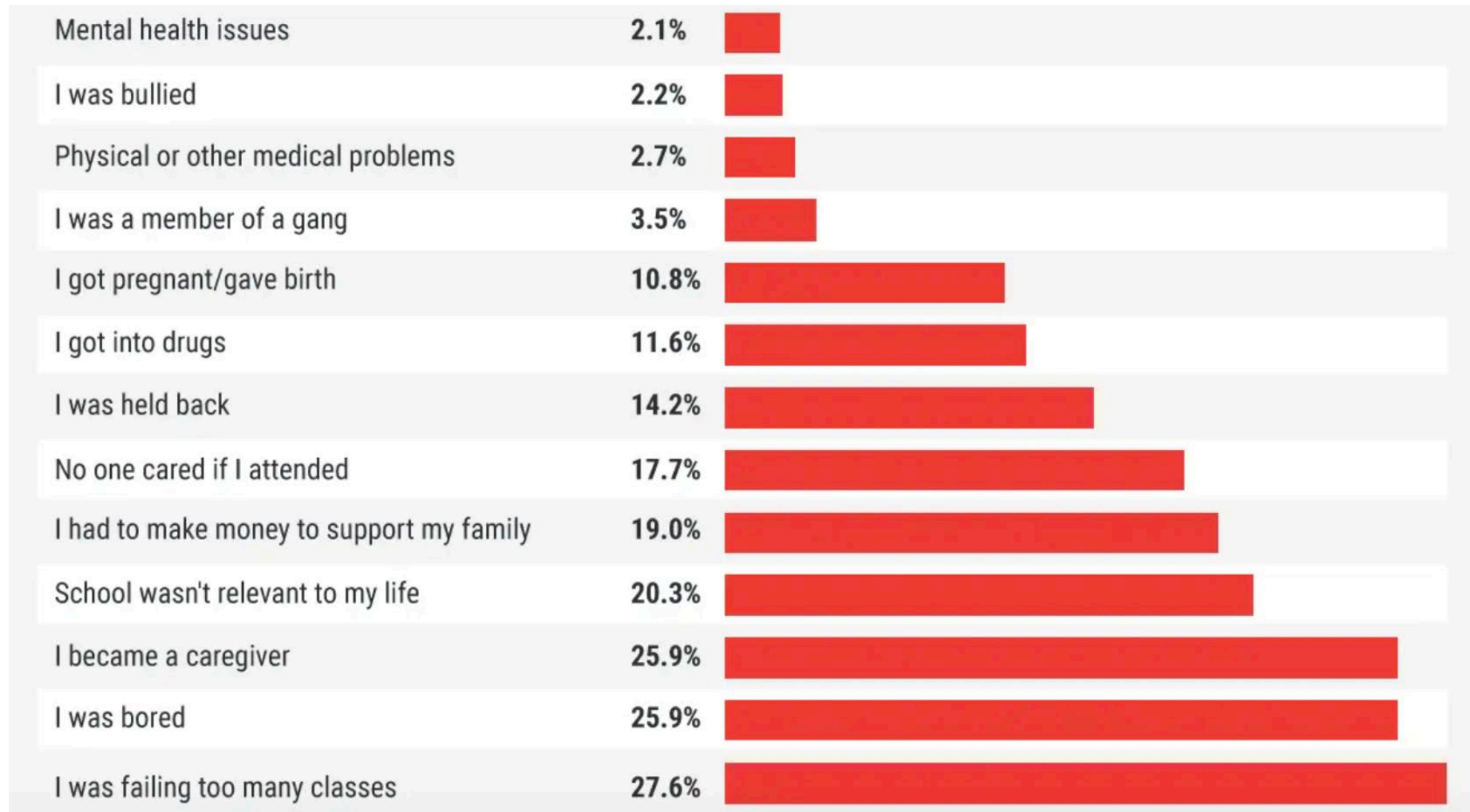
- a.  They had a negative view of their academic capabilities
- b. The other students made fun of them
- c. The teacher(s) made them feel stupid
- d. They were always in trouble for bad behavior



Who Drops Out?

- Children chronically absent in preschool through 1st grade are much less likely to read on grade level by 3rd grade; from there, they are **4x** more likely to drop out.
- By high school, attendance is a better dropout indicator than test scores.
- Students chronically absent between the 8th and 12th grade are **7x** more likely to drop out.

Common Reasons High School Students Drop Out



Alterable Dropout Variables

- High rates of absenteeism
- Problem behaviors
- Course failure
- Grade retention
- Negative attitudes toward school
- Low participation in extracurricular activities
- Level of engagement
- School climate

NYS Graduation and Dropout Rate Comparisons

Data from 2021-22 School Year	All Students	Column C: General Education Only	Column D: Students with Disabilities	Difference between Column C and D
<i>Graduation Rate</i>	89%	92%	71%	21% less
<i>Dropout Rate</i>	7%	6%	13%	7% more



Revisiting Graduation and Dropout Assumptions

Now that you have had time to reflect and review data, how can you work with others to have an impact on increasing graduation rates and decreasing dropout?

- In your local context, do you see patterns or themes?
- Do you have ideas of how to approach barriers or events that lead to students dropping out?
- Given the evidence you have of "who" is dropping out, how might you anticipate the use of evidence-based practices to have an impact?

Dropout Data Tools

Early Warning Systems



Using Dropout Data Tools

- Help a school organize, examine, analyze, and share its data related to school completion.
- Support the school in identifying needs and developing a local intervention plan as well as implementing and evaluating the plan.
- Help the school identify groups of students who have potential needs for additional supports and tiered interventions.

Dropout Data Tools

Early Warning Systems

Examples include:

- District's Student Management System
- NTACTION Core Data Tool
- Additional NTACTION tools that dig deeper:
 - Graduation and Dropout Tool
 - Attendance Tool
 - Academics Tool
 - Discipline Tool

NTACT:C Risk Calculator



Identifying Individual Student Needs

- A web-based early warning intervention system (also available in Excel)
- Examines 16 individual student data elements
- Provides information about each student's needs for intervention and support
- Helps identify students for intervention groups
- Estimates each student's risk of dropping out

While your EO may have a different tool, these are the data elements teams will want to gather for analysis

Strategies for Educational Organizations

Where should we start?



School Completion Research

- One of the most important factors in keeping a child from dropping out is the presence of a caring adult in their life—someone who believes in that child and provides encouragement, guidance, and support for staying in school.
- Relating and linking academic subjects to a youth's interests and vocational choices will help improve academic engagement.



Utilizing Culturally Responsive Practices

- Practitioners are encouraged to connect disciplinary concepts to students' experiences and knowledge, helping students see the relevance of school learning to their own lives outside of school (McIntosh et al., 2018, Simmons-Reed & Cartledge, 2014).
- Classroom management with an emphasis on preventing behaviors and individualizing corrective consequences (Cramer & Bennett, 2015) may reduce students' negative experiences regarding suspensions, expulsions, and dropping out.
- Increased family involvement may improve student attendance and decrease at-risk behaviors and stress in the school (Baker et. al 2016).

Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools



What Works Clearinghouse Educator's Practice Guide

- Targeted to school and district administrators, as well as members of student-support teams including school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and teachers.
- Provides recommendations that can be implemented in conjunction with existing academic curricula and student support services.
- No single recommendation is likely to prevent dropout entirely on its own because each addresses different types of student needs and challenges.

Recommended Practices for Dropout Prevention

- Recommendation 1: Monitor the progress of all students, and proactively intervene when students show early signs of attendance, behavior, or academic problems.
- Recommendation 2: Provide intensive, individualized support to students who have fallen off track and face significant challenges to success.
- Recommendation 3: Engage students by offering curricula and programs that connect schoolwork with college and career success and that improve students' capacity to manage challenges in and out of school.
- Recommendation 4: For schools with many at-risk students, create small, personalized communities to facilitate monitoring and support.

NTACT:C School Completion Toolkit



Contents of the Toolkit

- **Section 1: Introduction to School Completion (p. 1)**
- **Section 2: Predictors and Practices Related to School Completion and Post-School Success (p. 5)**
 - Student engagement (p. 5)
 - Academics and career development (p. 8)
 - Behavior and discipline (p. 19)
 - Attendance (p. 26)
 - School climate and safety (p. 30)
 - Family engagement (p. 33)
 - Reentry and reengagement (p. 45)
- **Section 3: Process to Improve School Completion Rates (p. 47)**

Possible Target Intervention Areas (1 of 4)

Area	Intervention
Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish policies and procedures that set high expectations for all students.• Ensure learning is relevant to them.• Implement a system of culturally responsive positive behavioral interventions and supports.• Encourage positive relationships between students and adults in the building.
Academic and Career Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement increasingly intensive, evidence-based methodologies, strategies, and interventions through high-quality instruction.• Provide academic supports such as tutoring, academic enrichment, and credit recovery.• Provide opportunities to explore careers in a variety of settings.

Possible Target Intervention Areas (2 of 4)

Area	Intervention
Behavior and Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental modifications—create environments to support the use of pro-social behaviors.• Individual student need/self-management—instruction in social skills and problem-solving skills.• Practice culturally responsive classroom management.• Adopt a school-wide behavior plan.
Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement systems to communicate with the student and family.• Implement attendance programs that employ a balance of rewards and sanctions.• Review and revise local attendance data and policies (e.g., don't tie attendance to grades or participation in activities).

Possible Target Intervention Areas (3 of 4)

Area	Intervention
School Climate and Safety	<p>Within the school, students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feel physically safe.• Feel social and emotional security.• Believe they are supported in their learning and goals (both short and long term).• Believe their social and civic learning and activities are important and supported.• Believe they are respected, trusted, and connected to the adults and the learning environment.

Possible Target Intervention Areas (4 of 4)

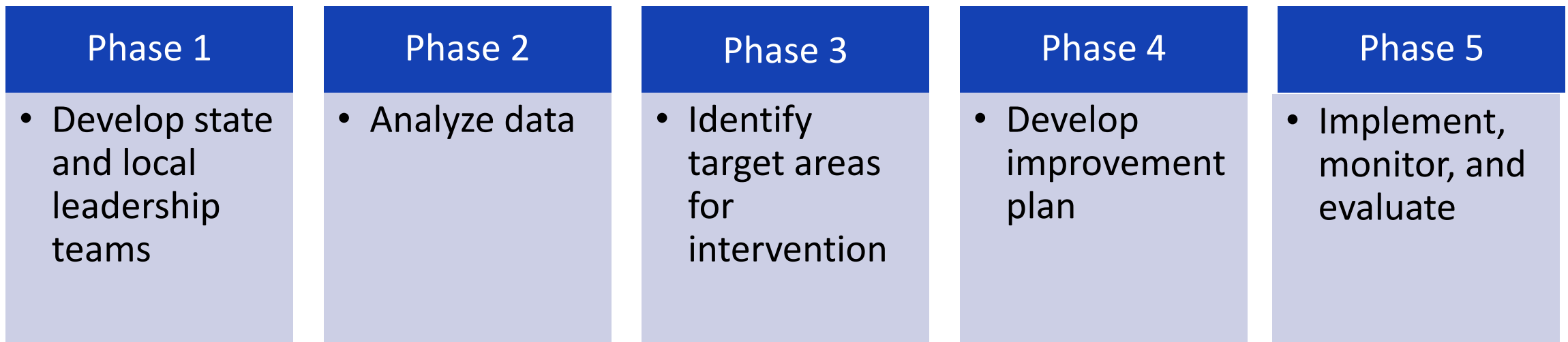


Area	Intervention
Family Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build on partnerships between the community and school to get students and families involved.• Develop supports for parents.<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Get parents into the school.– Provide ways for them to get involved in whatever capacity they can and want to.
Reentry and Reengagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide credit-recovery options.• Provide career readiness/work-based learning opportunities.• Implement a mentoring program.

The Dropout Prevention Intervention Framework

- Developed by the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD).
- Outlines steps that schools can use to develop and implement evidence-based interventions using their own data to improve graduation rates and decrease dropout.

Intervention Framework: Phases 1 -5



Developing a Process to Improve School Completion Rates

- Secure local critical partners' buy-in and support
- Develop local leadership teams
- Thoroughly examine system- and student-level data related to school completion
- Use program improvement planning tools to:
 - Identify areas of strength and need
 - Prioritize the needs and choose 2 or 3 target areas for intervention
 - Develop a local action plan
 - Implement and evaluate the interventions

Next Steps for Addressing School Completion in Your District





Where do we go from here?

Addressing Potential Obstacles

Time—Time and effort to implement changes

- Organize dedicated time to collaborate
- Leverage existing school resources (e.g., district data coaches)

Capacity—Lack of staff to deliver programming focused on students' capacity to manage challenges in and out of school

- Infuse teaching of social/emotional skills into the regular curriculum through structured group work
- Offer a peer mentoring program integrated into the school day, by providing peer mentors with training and oversight through a credit-bearing leadership course that meets as a regular scheduled class

Urgency—Recognition we need to help students now, not in the year it will take to implement changes

- Implement key strategies as soon as possible
- Consider alternative or block scheduling to allow teachers smaller group time with students whom they will be working with over multiple years

Next Steps

3-2-1 Activity



Identify:

- 3 things you learned from today's session
- 2 goals you have to improve school completion for students with disabilities in your school
- 1 next step you will take upon returning to your building

Questions and Answers



Resources

- [Attendance Works](#)
- [Diploma Types](#)
- [Multiple Pathways](#)
- [National Dropout Prevention Center](#)
- [NTACT:C Dropout Data Tools](#)
- [NYSED Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#)
- [NYSED SPP/APR](#)
- [NYS School Report Card](#)
- [Reentry Programs for Out of School Youth with Disabilities](#)

References (1 of 4)

- Baker, T. L., Wise, J., Kelley, G., & Skiba, R. J. (2016). Identifying barriers: Creating solutions to improve family engagement. *School Community Journal*, 26(2), 161–176. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>.
- Brown, M. R., Dennis, J. P., & Matute-Chavarria, M. (2019). Cultural relevance in special education: Current status and future directions. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 54(5), 304-310.
- Cramer, E. D., & Bennett, K. D. (2015). Implementing culturally responsive positive behavior interventions and supports in middle school classrooms. *Middle School Journal*, 46(3), 18–24.
- Feldman, D. L., Smith, A. T., & Waxman, B. L. (2017). "Why we drop out": Understanding and disrupting student pathways to leaving school. Teachers College Press. https://www.tcpres.com/why-we-drop-out-9780807758625?page_id=31.

References (2 of 4)

- Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The Achievement Gap and the Discipline Gap: Two Sides of the Same Coin? *Educational Researcher*, 39(1), 59–68.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09357621>
- Gould, S. & Weller, C. (2015) The most common reasons students drop out of high school are heartbreaking. <https://www.businessinsider.com/most-common-reasons-students-drop-out-of-high-school-2015-10>
- Klare, M., Baker, L., Butler, B. (2018). School Completion Toolkit. *National Technical Assistance Center on Transition*. https://transitionta.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/toolkit_School-Completion_2021_08-04.pdf
- McIntosh, K., Mercer, S. H., Nese, R. N. T., Strickland-Cohen, M. K., Kittelman, A., Hoselton, R., & Horner, R. H. (2018). Factors Predicting Sustained Implementation of a Universal Behavior Support Framework. *Educational Researcher*, 47(5), 307–316.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X18776975>

References (3 of 4)

- National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Students With Disabilities. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg>.
- Pyle, N. & Wexler, J. (2011). Preventing Students With Disabilities From Dropping Out. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 47(5), 283–289.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451211430118>
- Rumberger, R., Addis, H., Allensworth, E., Balfanz, R., Bruch, J., Dillon, E., Duardo, D., Dynarski, M., Ferguson, J., Jayanthi, M., Newman-Gonchar, R., Place, K., & Tuttle, C. (2017). Preventing dropout in secondary schools (NCEE 2017-4028). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. <https://whatworks.ed.gov>

References (4 of 4)

Simmons-Reed, E. & Cartledge, G. (2014). School Discipline Disproportionality: Culturally Competent Interventions for African American Males. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 4(2), 95-109.

Smith, E. & Burrow, C. (2020). *Effective Dropout Recovery Strategies and The Graduation Alliance Approach*. Graduation Alliance. https://www.graduationalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-Effective-Dropout-Recovery-Strategies_Grauation-Alliance-White-Paper.pdf

Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States. National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/dropout/ind_02.asp

US Department of Education. (2016). Every student, every day. Initiative to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/Publications/Details/272>

Contact Us

TAP for Transition

Jessica Elliott, Director
TAPtransition@cornell.edu



New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity



New York State Education Department
Office of Special Education
Educational Partnership
—
Technical Assistance Partnership
for Transition

This training was provided by the Technical Assistance Partnership for Transition at Cornell University. The OSE Educational Partnership is funded by the New York State Education Department Office of Special Education.