

Enough is Known for Action Series

Supporting Education and Career Goals of In-School Youth under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act:

Key Themes of Current Practices

This document, like the companion technical assistance document from the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education (Departments) on serving out-of-school youth (OSY) and reconnecting them back into education, is aimed at encouraging cross-agency collaboration at the local level to support improved education and employment outcomes for in-school youth (ISY). While the series focuses largely on OSY, this document is targeted to ISY. It is intended to support education and workforce system professionals who have interest in working more closely with each other and can be used to start initial conversations and collaborations.¹

Although the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) shifts the title I youth program's focus to OSY and new funding for ISY is not available at this time, the Departments hope that the following technical assistance can help cross-agency partners identify existing resources to support ISY and to work together to implement effective practices to keep youth engaged and on the path to educational and employment success.

§ 681.220 of WIOA, for purposes of the title I youth program, defines an in-school youth (ISY) as an individual who is:

- (a) Attending school (as defined by State law), including secondary and postsecondary school;
- (b) Not younger than age 14 or (unless an individual with a disability who is attending school under State law) older than age 21 at time of enrollment. Because age eligibility is based on age at enrollment, participants may continue to receive services beyond the age of 21 once they are enrolled in the program;
- (c) A low-income individual; and
- (d) One or more of the following:
 - (1) Basic skills deficient;
 - (2) An English language learner;
 - (3) An offender;
 - (4) A homeless individual aged 14 to 21 who meets the criteria defined in sec. 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2(6)), a homeless child or youth aged 14 to 21 who meets the criteria defined in sec. 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)), or a runaway;
 - (5) An individual in foster care or who has aged out of the foster care system or who has attained 16 years of age and left foster care for kinship guardianship or adoption, a child eligible for assistance under sec. 477 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 677), or in an out-of-home placement;
 - (6) An individual who is pregnant or parenting;
 - (7) An individual with a disability; or
 - (8) An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

¹ The examples and resource materials contained in this guidance are provided for the user's convenience. The inclusion of these materials is not intended to reflect their importance, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered. These materials may contain the views and recommendations of various subject matter experts as well as hypertext links, contact addresses and websites to information created and maintained by other public and private organizations. The opinions expressed in any of these materials do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the U.S. Department of Labor. The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor do not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information included in these materials.

Frequently Asked Questions: Engaging with Schools and Local Educational Agencies

- **Q:** Which personnel at a school, local educational agency (LEA), or State educational agency (SEA) would be best to contact about student services and potential collaboration?
- **A:** This depends on local context. In many cases, budgets are not school-based, and LEA or SEA personnel would likely be the most appropriate personnel to speak to specific programs and funding at schools or in individual LEAs. Information about school budgets can be found at the following American Association of School Administrators website:
https://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/files/SchoolBudgetBriefFINAL.pdf

- **Q:** What Federal programs might support local efforts to develop workforce skills and career readiness for ISY?
- **A:** Below is a list of Federal programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education that support the provision of services to ISY between the ages of 14-24²: Please note that this list is not comprehensive and may not reflect actual funding in a local area.
 - [Perkins Career and Technical Education](#)
 - [Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs \(GEAR UP\)](#)
 - [Federal TRIO Programs](#)
 - [Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education \(FIPSE\) – First in the World \(FITW\)](#)
 - [Investing in Innovation \(i3\)](#)
 - [Promise Neighborhoods](#)
 - [McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program](#)
 - [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#)
 - [Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\) Title I, Part A Grants](#)
 - [Migrant Education](#)
 - [Various Programs that Support Safe and Healthy Students](#)
 - [Indian Education Grants to Local Education Agencies](#)
 - [Indian Education Demonstration Grants for Indian Children](#)
 - [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part B](#)
 - [Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program](#)
 - [American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program](#)
 - [Supported Employment Program](#)
 - [Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education](#)

- **Q:** Which, if any, Federal programs might support employment of ISY?
- **A:** The following U.S. Department of Education programs may be used to support the provision of services necessary for ISY to obtain jobs:
 - [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#)
 - [Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(ESEA\) State Grants](#)
 - [Perkins Career and Technical Education](#)
 - [Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program](#)
 - [American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program](#)
 - [Supported Employment Program](#)
 - [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part B](#)

- **Q:** When in the annual calendar year should workforce system personnel reach out to school, LEA, or SEA staff about these programs and potential collaboration?
- **A:** This depends on the local context. In many cases, budgets are determined in the spring and, at the latest in the summer, so it may be easiest to contact educational personnel in winter or spring when they are planning for an upcoming program year.

² Note: Age eligibility for youth varies by program.

- **Q:** What are some examples of local education and workforce system collaboration?
- **A:** Please see the companion OSY technical assistance document for examples of collaboration between education and workforce personnel.
- **Q:** How do I connect with my local workforce partners?
- **A:** Workforce Development Boards (WDB) direct Federal, state, and local funding to workforce development programs. They also oversee the American Job Centers, where job seekers can get employment information, find out about career development training opportunities, and connect to various programs in their area. To connect with the nearest WDB, visit <http://www.servicelocator.org/workforcecontacts.asp>.
- **Q:** How do I connect with a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency?
- **A:** State VR agencies receive Federal and State funds to provide employment-related services for individuals with disabilities, including transition services for students and youth with disabilities and supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities who require supported employment services. These services are provided so that these individuals may prepare for and engage in gainful employment that is consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. • VR agencies must reserve and use at least 15 percent of their Federal VR allotment for the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities. In addition, VR agencies may use funds made available to State, local, or private funding sources to coordinate with LEAs to provide these services. To connect with the VR agency closest to you, visit <https://rsa.ed.gov/>.
- **Q:** What are examples of practices that education and workforce system partners have implemented jointly to improve outcomes for ISY?
- **A:** Two examples:

At John F. Kennedy High School in Denver, Colorado, low-income, minority students learn about opportunities in the energy industry because of the local partnership between the workforce and public education systems. Local employers partnered with Denver Public Schools when the school district received a \$7 million Youth CareerConnect Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and U.S. Department of Education in 2014. Similar to other workforce program funding from DOL, the in-school program raises awareness of and prepares students for careers in local industries. Under the grant, students are given opportunities to job shadow, receive one-on-one mentoring, and learn about jobs in the energy industry and how to prepare for them. The employers value connecting with future job applicants who live in the community.

In Minnesota, the workforce system partners with LEAs and provides high school students with help to find careers of interest, career counseling, and labor market information. The partnership also conducts résumé writing workshops, helps filling out job applications, and helps with career exploration tools such as www.mynextmove.org and ggetmyfuture.org. Employers share information about job opportunities in the area, and provide job-shadow opportunities.

- **Q:** What are some evidence-based practices for serving ISY?
- **A:** The following list of practices has been excerpted from the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guide on Dropout Prevention (2008).³

Data & Diagnostics: Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at highest risk of dropping out. Before undertaking any special interventions to support at-risk ISY, it is recommended that schools build systems and use them to analyze student data regularly in order to identify the specific students who could most urgently benefit from extra services or

³ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, IES Practice Guide: Dropout Prevention, September 2008. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practice_guides/dp_pg_090308.pdf

supports. Researchers have determined that absences from school, grade retention, low academic achievement, low socioeconomic status, and behavioral problems are indicators for dropping out; schools and service providers should also collect data on and monitor students' engagement and sense of belonging in school, such as through surveys and focus groups. In addition to data analysis, successful implementation includes regular monitoring and following up with students when needed.

Adult Advocates: Assign caring, well-equipped adult advocates to provide targeted support to students at risk of dropping out. Often, at-risk students face significant personal, family, and social barriers that further challenge their chances of academic success. Establishing an ongoing relationship with a caring and specially trained adult can provide tailored support for students to address academic, personal, and emotional needs. Research has shown that students supported by these types of relationships feel a greater sense of engagement and school belonging and reduced risky behaviors and absentee rates, and improved grades and social skills. Most successful iterations of this intervention included frequent contact and regular intensive meetings as well as specialized training (including information about resources for the student and his/her family) and purposeful selection and pairing of the adult advocates involved.

Academic Supports: Provide targeted academic support and enrichment to students in order to improve academic performance. Because research has demonstrated that low academic performance, absenteeism, and grade retention are related to dropping out, providing additional academic support and enrichment may help to address these academic risk factors and to increase student engagement. Academic supports can be offered in a variety of formats, including through more intensive in- or out-of-school programs or homework assistance/tutoring programs. Some successful models have employed specific courses (remedial/credit recovery or enrichment) through summer school or Saturday school, as well as targeted individual or small group support. Enrichment opportunities, like leadership development, work-based learning, and special coursework, can increase academic and student engagement, especially for students who may be bored and disengaged from school.

Non-Academic Skill Development: Implement special, targeted programs to improve students' classroom behavior, non-cognitive skills, and social skills. Disruptive behavior and frequent absences are correlated with dropping out. Thus, intervention programs have sought to target the root causes of these issues by improving students' problem-solving and non-cognitive skills, working to thereby increase engagement and positive in-school behaviors. The main focuses of this intervention should be helping students build positive relationships and developing key life skills, which affect school performance. Different models for executing this intervention include: 1) utilizing engaged adults to establish academic and behavioral goals that include specific benchmarks jointly with students and providing guidance so that students develop relevant skills towards meeting the goals; 2) incorporating problem-solving and decision-making skills into the curricula, either whole classes or small-group seminars for targeted students; and 3) establishing partnerships with community organizations and other agency partners to improve coordination and to facilitate students' ease of access to potential outside resources.

Personalization: Create a more personalized learning environment and instructional processes. Efforts to create a sense of community through whole school or other reforms have been shown to be associated with positive student achievement, improved school climate, and higher attendance and graduation rates. Personalizing the learning environment can help students' connectedness and engagement, and also increase educators' ability to know and address specific academic or other challenges that students face; some reforms also increase opportunities for innovative and engaging teaching. Implementing this intervention can include establish small learning communities (whole school, one grade level, cohorts, school-within-a-school), utilizing team teaching, creating smaller classes, or extending classroom time so as to create more time for meaningful student-teacher and student-student interaction. Encouraging and facilitating student participation in extracurricular activities can also engage at-risk students.

Rigor and Relevance: Provide rigorous, relevant instruction to prepare students for college and careers and increase student engagement. At-risk students, who may be less engaged in school, can benefit from understanding the relevance of academics to their future in college and in career and from exposure to experiences and advising that expands their relevant knowledge and skills. Integrating career and technical education through

multiple pathways toward college and careers has been shown to boost student engagement and achievement. Multiple pathways models consist of college preparatory academic classes, a choice of professional/technical core classes, and field-based learning. Research also suggests that providing access to advisors to help students consider and navigate their postsecondary options may help keep them in school. Potential options to implement this practice include providing ongoing, meaningful professional development to educators, integrating career and technical education (CTE) through career academies or other multiple pathways models (school-within-a-school or occupation-related classes), career days, college visits, collaborations to bring in community members to share their professional experiences, and targeted advising and assistance for at-risk students on navigating the college application and financial aid processes.

- **Dual enrollment opportunities** that allow students to take rigorous college coursework while in secondary school have also been positively associated with graduation rates, academic achievement, and postsecondary enrollment. Early college high schools partner with colleges and universities to offer all students an opportunity to earn an Associate's degree or up to 2 years of college credits toward a Bachelor's degree during high school at no or low cost to the students.

For more examples of evidence-based practices for serving ISY, please see IES' [What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\)](#), DOL's [Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research \(CLEAR\)](#), or the [Workforce Systems Strategies site](#).

As a way to grow the collective capacity of the field, we welcome further examples of collaboration between the workforce system and educational agencies in supporting youth in school and those at risk of dropping out of school. Please submit examples to youth.services@dol.gov.