

# National Dropout Prevention Center/Network

## **15 Effective Strategies for Reducing the Dropout Rate**

### ***School and Community Perspective***

1. **Systemic Renewal:**  
A continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners.
2. **School-Community Collaboration:**  
When all groups in a community provide collective support to the school, a strong infrastructure sustains a caring supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve.
3. **Safe Learning Environments:**  
A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. A safe learning environment provides daily experiences, at all grade levels that enhance positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills in all students.

### ***Early Interventions***

4. **Family Engagement:**  
Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in schools.
5. **Early Childhood Education:**  
Birth-to five interventions demonstrate that providing a child additional enrichments can enhance brain development. The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately dropout is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of their school experience through the primary grades.
6. **Early Literacy Development:**  
Early interventions to help low-achieving students improve their reading and writing skills establish the necessary foundation for effective learning in all other subjects.

## ***Basic Core Strategies***

7. **Mentoring/Tutoring:**  
Mentoring is a one-on-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring, also a one-on-one activity focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.
8. **Service-Learning:**  
Service-Learning connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning. This teaching/learning method promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels.
9. **Alternative Schooling:**  
Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts a variety of options that can lead to graduation, with programs paying special attention to the student's individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.
10. **After-School Opportunities:**  
Many schools are providing after-school and summer enhancement programs that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of area. Such experiences are especially important for students at risk of school failure because they fill the afternoon "gap time" with constructive and engaging activities.

## ***Making the Most of Instruction***

11. **Professional Development:**  
Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and have an avenue by which they can continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.
12. **Active Learning:**  
Active Learning embraces teaching and learning strategies that engage and involve students in the learning process. Students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners when educators show them that there are different ways to learn.
13. **Educational Technology:**  
Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction to engage students in authentic learning, addressing multiple intelligences, and adapting to students' learning styles.

14. **Individualized Instruction:**

Each student has unique interests and past learning experiences. An individualized instructional program for each student allows for flexibility in teaching methods and motivational strategies to consider these individual differences.

15. **Career and Technical Education (CTE):**

A quality CTE program and a related guidance program are essential for all students. School-to-work programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to measure up to the larger demands of today's workplace.



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## Specific Strategies to Address at Risk Students

- Identify vulnerable students
- Have a strong career education/workforce readiness component
- Use out-of-classroom learning
- Are intensive
  - Small
  - Individualized
  - Low student-teacher ratios
  - Offer more counseling than "regular" schools
- Accommodate individuals situations, such as a pregnant or parenting student, family crisis, disconnected kids
- Ending grade retention
- Ensuring that the weakest students get the best teachers
- Giving student assignments appropriate to level/ability at which they can succeed
- Providing staff with training in cultural differences, sensitivity to students needs
- Hiring and supporting staff who embrace youth development; who want to see all their young people succeed
- Creating alternatives to the academic school
- Starting high school later in the day for improved alertness
- Guaranteeing that school is a place where students want to be
- Providing relevant and interesting learning
- Creating a marketing plan for the academic program that encompasses sound principles of learning, including physical, mental, spiritual, and social health along with intellectual

## Arizona Models of Effective Strategies Application

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Program &amp; Description</b>
<p><b>Systemic Renewal:</b> A continuing process of evaluation goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners</p>	<p><b><u>Arizona Department of Education</u></b></p> <p><b>Innovative and Exemplary Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ High School Renewal &amp; Improvement Initiative</li> <li>◆ State Team</li> <li>◆ BRII Conference</li> <li>◆ BRII Training of Trainers Cadre</li> <li>◆ Three HS Summits: CIA, Personalization, and Leadership (link conference information)</li> <li>◆ API Grant/Gifted Education Grants</li> <li>◆ Arts Education Professional Development Grants</li> <li>◆ Indian Education, USDOE Dropout Prevention Grant application targeting White Mountain and San Carlos Apache Tribes</li> <li>◆ AIMS Dropout Prevention grants (5.5 million dollars)</li> <li>◆ Legislative-Tax Based Dropout Prevention programs (20 districts)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Tucson USD</u></b></p> <p><b>Early Intervention, monitoring, data analysis and continues evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Research and Evaluation Department developed an at-risk model to aid in targeting funds to impacted populations</li> <li>◆ Website of information on programs; publication of prevention strategies manual; implementation of quarterly reports to monitor specific populations</li> <li>◆ Professional Development and Staff Utilization plan</li> <li>◆ Prevention/Intervention specialists' positions funded</li> <li>◆ Magnet Program at Tucson High</li> <li>◆ Smaller Learning Communities Grant</li> <li>◆ Competency Based Guidance Program Implementation assists students in developing realistic education and career plan</li> <li>◆ Verify Home and Private school affidavits with Pima County Superintendent</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Phoenix Union High School District</u></b></p> <p><b>Ongoing task force to research and make recommendations with regard to dropout prevention issues.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Student Community Liaison monitors student progress, handles interventions, family contacts, CUTS program</li> <li>◆ <b>SMART</b> (see Mentoring)</li> <li>◆ KKIS Program (Keep Kids in School) targets specialized populations</li> <li>◆ Bostrom Alternative School</li> <li>◆ Free Summer School</li> <li>◆ Discipline Intervention Groups</li> <li>◆ Homeless Program</li> <li>◆ Unitown</li> <li>◆ <b>Project EXCEL</b> (AIMS Intervention)</li> </ul> <p><b>Small School Sites:</b> First Responder Academy, Bioscience H.S., two traditional schools of 425 students</p>

## Arizona Models of Effective Strategies Application

<p><b>School-Community Collaboration:</b> When all groups in a community provide collective support to the school, a strong infrastructure sustains a caring supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve.</p>	<p><b>Maricopa County Community Colleges</b></p> <p><b>ACE and ACE +</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <u>ACE and ACE+</u> programs identify “at-risk” students at the end of their sophomore year to participate in summer and Saturday college credit courses. Their goal is to support high school graduation and the transition to college for nontraditional students. The program includes family involvement. Students earn as many as 24 college credit hours prior to high school graduation.</li> </ul> <p><b>GEARUP (Northern Arizona University)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A is a national initiative, funded under the U.S. Department of Education, to encourage more young people from low-income families to go to college. It is designed to accelerate the academic achievement of cohorts of students so that they are prepared to succeed beyond high school. In 2000, NAU was awarded two five-year GEAR UP grants. NAU is committed to the GEAR UP vision: seeing a significant increase in the number of low-income students who succeed in college and improvement in Arizona's alarming high school dropout rate. NAU GEAR UP serves nearly 4000 students in selected schools across the state (Alhambra High School, AZ School for the Deaf and Blind, Coconino High School, Cordova Middle School, Kingman High School-North Campus, Santa Cruz County, Pinon High School, PIPELINE Project, Mesa High School, Westwood High School, and Yuma High School). Services for students are coordinated by Site Coordinators at each school. The NAU GEAR UP State Office in Phoenix lends leadership, development, planning and support to its grant sites in meeting GEAR UP goals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Amphitheater High School</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Collaboration with Pima Community College and Aztec Middle College</li> </ul> <p><b>Jobs for Arizona’s Graduates (JAG)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Creates business, industry, education partnership committed to supporting school attendance, graduation, and employability skills through classroom and work based learning experiences.</li> </ul> <p><b>Phoenix Union High School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Hoops of Learning</b> Works with Native American students to support the goal of graduation while maintaining their cultural heritage. Student may co enroll in Phoenix College, south Mountain CC, Glendale CC, and Gateway to get a head start on post-secondary education</li> <li>◆ <b>Dual Enrollment Programs</b> Offered on many campuses to provide opportunities for students to gain college credit while enrolled in high school.</li> <li>◆ <b>ASTA-</b> 6-day Summer Transition Academy at ASU for under-represented students who have recently graduated and plan to attend ASU</li> </ul> <p><b>Tuba City Unified School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Collaboration with hospital health promotion program, tribal social services and chapter services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safe Learning Environments:</b> A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. A safe learning environment provides daily experience, at all grade levels that enhance positive e social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills in all students.</p>	<p><b>Miami Unified School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ K-8 Responsible Thinking Program</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Boboquivari</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Character Education Program used to improve Native American identity formation and empowerment</li> </ul> <p><b><u>ADE Character Education</u></b> is in a number of schools in Arizona (i.e. Kingman, Scottsdale, Sierra Vista)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Uses the six pillars of character development</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Family Engagement:</b> Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children’s achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student’s success in schools.</p>	<p><b>Miami Unified School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Interventionists do home visits and handles referrals</li> </ul> <p><b>Glendale Union High School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ School Social Workers handle home contacts to track “no shows” and community referral information. Classroom teachers increase number and quality of home contacts, often utilizing the AT &amp; T language line for translation services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Phoenix Union High School District/Arizona State University Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Assists in transition from elementary to high school and from high school to post-secondary education through special services and workshops to promote academic achievement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Early Childhood Education:</b> Birth to five interventions demonstrate that providing a child additional enrichments can enhance brain development. The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately dropout is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of their school experience through the primary grades.</p>	<p><b>Not Applicable</b></p>
<p><b>Early Literacy Development:</b> Early interventions to help low-achieving students improve their reading and writing skills establish the necessary foundation for effective learning in all other subjects.</p>	<p><b>Not Applicable</b></p>
<p><b>Mentoring/Tutoring:</b> Mentoring is a one-on-one caring, supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee that is based on trust. Tutoring, also a one-on-one activity focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, or math competencies.</p>	<p><b>Amphitheater Public Schools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ “SOAR” uses mentoring support to transition students from alternative education to the regular classrooms through enhancement of study and survival skills.</li> </ul> <p><b>Sierra Vista</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ English and Math tutors available after school, 4 days a week</li> <li>◆ Homework hotlines</li> <li>◆ Truancy/Mentorship Program in partnership with community prevention programs</li> </ul> <p><b>Tolleson Union High School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Strong mentoring where each freshman is provided an adult mentor</li> <li>◆ Dropout Intervention Team, consisting of a teacher, counselor, social worker, administrator and nurse meet with individuals and groups of at risk students.</li> </ul> <p><b>Scottsdale Unified School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Use Academic Intervention Advocates and AIMS Success Academies to target specific needs related to academic standards.</li> </ul> <p><b>Phoenix Union High School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ S.M.A.R.T (Student Mentoring with Achievement Resource Teams) Encourages students to focus on educational goals and personal values through academic support and on-on-one mentoring. Mentors come from any school staff member and from businesses and colleges.</li> <li>◆ “Mentoring Students Effectively” is a 15 hour mentoring course. Mentors focus on at-risk incoming freshmen</li> </ul> <p><b>Tempe Union High School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Best Buddies/Bolt Buddies develops leadership skills through the mentoring of special education students</li> </ul>
<p><b>Service-Learning:</b> Service-Learning connects meaningful community service experiences with academic leaning. This teaching/learning method promotes personal and social growth, career development, and civic responsibility and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels.</p>	<p><b>Jobs for Arizona’s Graduates (JAG)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All JAG students are members of the Career Association, which is a highly motivated student lead organization. As a group the students determine and plan projects to further their leadership and vocational skills, while practicing and demonstrating their personal and social skills. Most important are the Service Learning and Leadership Projects they complete. By learning the importance of giving back, JAG students become empowered members of their community. Over the last two years JAG students have averaged over 5500 hours of community service learning projects.</li> </ul>

## Arizona Models of Effective Strategies Application

<p><b><u>Alternative Schooling:</u></b>          Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts a variety of options that can lead to graduation, with programs paying special attention to the student’s individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma.</p>	<p><i>Most districts offer some form of on campus or alternative campus schooling</i></p> <p><b>Mesa Unified</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Power Middle School and Boulder Canyon High School, East Valley Academy, and TAPP (Teenage Pregnancy Program)</li> </ul> <p><b>Glendale Union High School District</b>          Metro Center Academy, School within a School programs, Transitions School for students returned from private placement special needs.</p> <p><b>Amphitheater</b>          El Hogar for middle and high school students on long term suspensions or expelled from their home campuses.</p> <p><b>Yuma Union High School District (Yuma Continuation School)</b>          Separate site for students on long term suspension uses NovaNet in a self- paced setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b><u>Vista School:</u></b> innovative and time-intensive instruction and integrated technology; block schedule, flexible entry and exit to and from home schools</li> </ul> <p><b>Scottsdale Unified School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>Sierra Vista Academy</i> serves elementary, middle and high school students at risk of dropping out. Five high schools offer alternative on-line curriculum for grade replacement or grade recovery for graduation. Programs are offered during the day, at night, and during the summer.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tuba City Alternative School (Nine Voices Prevention and Intervention Model)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Grounded in cultural teachings, thought, character, and behaviors. Students have been referred from junior high or high school due to disciplinary problems. Strong counseling component with one-on-one or small group counseling sessions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Apache Junction “AIMS” Triage Academy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Students who have not been successful on the AIMS are placed into a two hour teaching block in the area or areas of assistance they require. They receive 2 credits for each block. Individual assistance is provided by an instructor and aide. Plato is the computer based program utilized. Instruction is highly individualized. The program is also used as a professional development piece for improving instructional strategies in all classrooms</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>After-School Opportunities:</u></b>          Many schools are providing after-school and summer enhancement programs that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of area. Such experiences are especially important for students at risk of school failure because they fill the afternoon “gap time” with constructive and engaging activities.</p>	<p><b>St. Johns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Provides tutoring in Saturday School</li> <li>◆ Study Halls and noontime detentions</li> <li>◆ Extended year programs in reading and math skill areas</li> </ul> <p><b>Mesa Unified School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Special programs for grade 10-12 special populations such as migrant, special education, Title I, ELL and Native American students to assist in 1-2 credit recovery opportunity. Targets achievement gaps in reading and math.</li> </ul> <p><b>Glendale Union High School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Summer math program targets incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders identified as needing to strengthen skills to build high school success. Utilizes middle school and high school teachers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Phoenix Union High School District</b>          PM school for making up credits for graduation</p>

## Arizona Models of Effective Strategies Application

<p><b><u>Professional Development:</u></b>          Teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and have an avenue by which they can continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.</p>	<p><b>Glendale Union High School District Mentoring Program</b>          Highly structured program of support for teachers in years 1-3 of employment. Offers strong support system for curriculum alignment, classroom management, classroom instruction, and assessment</p> <p><b>Tucson Unified School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Provides monthly professional development for prevention specialists and counselors</li> </ul> <p><b>ADE IDEAL/ASSET with ASU</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Teachers may take professional development courses online at a time convenient to them</li> <li>◆ ADE Best Practices, Title I, High School Renewal summits, SEI certification, CTE and other areas offer ongoing opportunities for professional development of Arizona teachers.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Active Learning:</u></b>          Active Learning embraces teaching and learning strategies that engage and involve students in the learning process. Students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners when educators show them that there are different ways to learn.</p>	<p><b>Pending</b></p>
<p><b><u>Educational Technology:</u></b>          Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction to engage students in authentic learning, addressing multiple intelligences, and adapting to students' learning styles.</p>	<p><b>Mesa Distance Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Credit earning courses offered over the internet to help students recover or accelerate credits towards graduation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Arizona Department of Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ AP courses on line through IDEAL beginning 2005-06</li> </ul> <p><b>Sunnyside Unified School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Alternative Education center offers a recovery program where students can take computer assisted instruction combined with half-time job experience.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Individualized Instruction:</u></b>          Each student has unique interests and past learning experiences. An individualized instructional program for each student allows for flexibility in teaching methods and motivational strategies to consider these individual differences.</p>	<p><b>Amphitheater</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "Bridges" program allows students to complete deficiencies from 8<sup>th</sup> grade while taking high school courses.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Competency Based Guidance/Arizona Counselors Academy</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Arizona is a leader in implementing the National Model in our high schools. It accommodates a student's current educational and personal needs and helps them establish priorities in planning for their future in post secondary education or in the workforce. Led by the Arizona Counselor Association.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Career and Technical Education (CTE)</u></b>          :A quality CTE program and a related guidance program are essential for all students. School to-work programs recognize that youth need specific skills to prepare them to measure up to the larger demands of today's workplace.</p>	<p><b>East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Example of state regional consortiums that create a relevant environment for connecting youth to school-to-work options with participating businesses. Students have opportunities for job placement, apprenticeships, internships, cooperative education and college credit articulation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cooperative Education Programs (IC, COE, DCE, HERO, HOE)</b> Most high schools offer some form of this program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Students attend regular school during the day and engage in employment after school or on the weekends. Fields of study include business, industrial arts, health and home economic related fields. Work is combined with a class in which they learn job skills, responsibility and how to balance personal and work life.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tucson Unified School District</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Individual Vocational Education Plans</li> <li>◆ Job Shadowing</li> </ul>