Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: J. **Date:** October 18, 2007

Topic: First Review, Study of High School Dropout and Graduation Rates in the Commonwealth (SJR 329)

Presenter: Dr. Deborah Jonas, Executive Director for Research and Strategic Planning

Telephone Number: 804-225-2067 **E-Mail Address:** Deborah.Jonas@doe.virginia.gov

Origin:

____ Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

__X__ Board review required by

__X__ State or federal law or regulation

____ Board of Education regulation

____ Other: _____

__X__ Action requested at this meeting ____ Action requested at future meeting: _____ (date)

Previous Review/Action:

__X__ No previous board review/action

____ Previous review/action

date _____

action _____

Background Information:

Joint resolution 329 (SJR 329) from the 2007 General Assembly Session required the Virginia Board of Education (BOE) to study high school dropout and graduation rates in the Commonwealth. The legislation required the Board of Education to:

- Evaluate the relevancy of the current process and procedures for defining, counting, and reporting school dropout statistics and consider the need for revisions in such process and procedures and compliance by school divisions;
- Determine the number of students who dropped out of school before the seventh grade and the reasons therefor and the number of students who graduated annually, for school years 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006;
- Ascertain whether, by whom, and the manner in which students at risk of dropping out are counseled to remain in school;
- Identify local school division initiatives and efforts to retain and retrieve students at risk of dropping out, particularly student populations with low high school graduation rates; and

- Recommend such policy, statutory, fiscal, or regulatory changes as the Board may deem necessary to increase the high school graduation rates, particularly among student populations with high dropout rates.

To meet the requirements of the study, the BOE and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE):

- Reviewed relevant education and scientific literature;
- Reviewed VDOE current policies;
- Collected and analyzed data from the VDOE Education Information Management System (EIMS); and
- Conducted a survey of local school divisions to gather information about initiatives and efforts to retain and retrieve students at risk of dropping out of school, including counseling services. Eighty-five (85) percent of Virginia's 132 school divisions responded to the survey.

Summary of Major Elements

Results of the study showed that:

- VDOE's definition of a student dropout is consistent with the definition developed by the National Center for Education Statistics.
- Historically, VDOE has calculated an annual (or event) dropout rate for students in grades 7-12. The rate reflects the number of students who drop out of school in a given year.
- Experts have recommended that state departments of education report cohort dropout rates for each group of students who enter ninth grade. This rate requires at-least four years of student-level data, which will be available for the first time in the fall of 2008.
- Based on two years of available data, less than one percent of all students enrolled in grades K-6 voluntarily withdraw from school.
- In grades 7-12, the annual dropout rate dropped from 2.2 percent in the 2002-2003 to 1.9 percent in the 2004-2005 school year, and remained constant at 1.9 percent in the 2005-2006 school year.
- All school divisions reported that counseling is available to students at risk of dropping out of middle and high school; 97 percent of responding divisions provide counseling to at-risk elementary school students.
- Students are counseled by a variety of professionals, including school counselors, principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and social workers.
- School divisions offer a wide variety of programs and services to students at-risk of dropping out and those who drop out and return to school. The services described are consistent with those that research suggests can support students and help more students complete high school.
- More than half of school divisions responding to VDOE's survey reported that they provide specific support services to student populations considered to be at high risk of dropping out of school. Several divisions also reported that all of their services are available to all students.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Beginning in 2008, the Virginia Department of Education should report both the annual and cohort dropout rates.

a. The annual rate should be reported as the rate of student dropouts in grades 7-12 and grades 9-12 to provide a more complete picture of high school dropouts. The primary purpose of continuing to report the annual dropout rate is to facilitate a comparison with previous years' data.

b. The cohort rate should provide information on the four-year, five-year, and six-year dropout rates.

2. Dropout rates should be published in the context of other information, including

   a. Graduation rates;

   b. Completion rates that include graduates and students who earn an alternative completion credentials (e.g., General Education Development certificate (GED); and

   c. A 'remain in school' rate for years 5 and 6.

3. The Board of Education should support initiatives that encourage schools and school divisions to verify the status of students who exit Virginia public schools.

4. The Department of Education should continue to partner with other stakeholders, such as the Department of Juvenile Justice, to develop strategies for dropout prevention, and provide training opportunities to school staff and others who work to prevent or recover dropouts.

5. The General Assembly should continue to support programs targeted at increasing the graduation rate, such as Project Graduation

6. The BOE should encourage school divisions to provide professional development related to dropout prevention and recovery to help teachers and other professionals who work with at-risk students provide stronger support services.

Superintendent's Recommendation:
The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the Study of High School Dropout and Graduation Rates in the Commonwealth (SJR 329) and submit to the Governor and General Assembly.

Impact on Resources:
No additional resources are required.

Timetable for Further Review/Action: Following approval, the report will be forwarded to the Governor and the General Assembly.

VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

REPORT

Study of High School Dropout and Graduation Rates in the Commonwealth (SJR 329)

SUBMITTED TO

GOVERNOR TIMOTHY M. KAINE
AND
THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OCTOBER 18, 2007

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Executive Summary

Joint resolution 329 (SJR 329)[1] from the 2007 General Assembly Session required the Virginia Board of Education (BOE) to study high school dropout and graduation rates in the Commonwealth. The legislation required the Board of Education to:

- Evaluate the relevancy of the current process and procedures for defining, counting, and reporting school dropout statistics and consider the need for revisions in such process and procedures and compliance by school divisions;
- Determine the number of students who dropped out of school before the seventh grade and the reasons therefor and the number of students who graduated annually, for school years 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006;
- Ascertain whether, by whom, and the manner in which students at risk of dropping out are counseled to remain in school;
- Identify local school division initiatives and efforts to retain and retrieve students at risk of dropping out, particularly student populations with low high school graduation rates; and
- Recommend such policy, statutory, fiscal, or regulatory changes as the Board may deem necessary to increase the high school graduation rates, particularly among student populations with high dropout rates.

To meet the requirements of the study, the BOE and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE):

- Reviewed relevant education and scientific literature;
- Reviewed VDOE current policies;
- Collected and analyzed data from the VDOE Education Information Management System (EIMS); and
- Conducted a survey of local school divisions to gather information about initiatives and efforts to retain and retrieve students at risk of dropping out of school, including counseling services. Eighty-five (85) percent of Virginia's 132 school divisions responded to the survey.

Results of the study showed that:

- VDOE's definition of a student dropout is consistent with the definition developed by the National Center for Education Statistics.
- Historically, VDOE has calculated an annual (or event) dropout rate for students in grades 7-12. The rate reflects the number of students who drop out of school in a given year.
- Experts have recommended that state departments of education report cohort dropout rates for each group of students who enter ninth grade. This rate requires at-least four years of student-level data, which will be available for the first time in the fall of 2008.
- Based on two years of available data, less than one percent of all students enrolled in grades K-6 voluntarily withdraw from school.

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[1] See Appendix A for a copy of the legislation.

- In grades 7-12, the annual dropout rate dropped from 2.2 percent in the 2002-2003 to 1.9 percent in the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years.
- All school divisions reported that counseling is available to students at risk of dropping out of middle and high school; 97 percent of responding divisions provide counseling to at-risk elementary school students.
- Students are counseled by a variety of professionals, including school counselors, principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and social workers.
- School divisions offer a wide variety of programs and services to students at-risk of dropping out and those who drop out and return to school. The services described are consistent with those that research suggests can support students and help more students complete high school.
- More than half of school divisions responding to VDOE's survey reported that they provide specific support services to student populations considered to be at high risk of dropping out of school. Several divisions also reported that all of their services are available to all students.

Based on these findings, the Board of Education recommends the following:

7. Beginning in 2008, the Virginia Department of Education should report both the annual and cohort dropout rates.
   d. The annual rate should be reported as the rate of student dropouts in grades 7-12 and grades 9-12 to provide a more complete picture of high school dropouts. The primary purpose of continuing to report the annual dropout rate is to facilitate a comparison with previous years' data.
   e. The cohort rate should provide information on the four-year, five-year, and six-year dropout rates.
8. Dropout rates should be published in the context of other information, including
   a. Graduation rates;
   b. Completion rates that include graduates and students who earn an alternative completion credentials (e.g., General Education Development certificate (GED); and
   c. A 'remain in school' rate for years 5 and 6.
9. The Board of Education should support initiatives that encourage schools and school divisions to verify the status of students who exit Virginia public schools.
10. The Department of Education should continue to partner with other stakeholders, such as the Department of Juvenile Justice, to develop strategies for dropout prevention, and provide training opportunities to school staff and others who work to prevent or recover dropouts.
11. The General Assembly should continue to support programs targeted at increasing the graduation rate, such as Project Graduation.
12. The BOE should encourage school divisions to provide professional development related to dropout prevention and recovery to help teachers and other professionals who work with at-risk students provide stronger support services.

Introduction

Joint resolution 329 (SJR 329)[2] from the 2007 General Assembly Session required the Virginia Board of Education (BOE) to study high school dropout and graduation rates in the Commonwealth. The legislation required the Board of Education to:

- Evaluate the relevancy of the current process and procedures for defining, counting, and reporting school dropout statistics and consider the need for revisions in such process and procedures and compliance by school divisions;
- Determine the number of students who dropped out of school before the seventh grade and the reasons therefor and the number of students who graduated annually, for school years 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006;
- Ascertain whether, by whom, and the manner in which students at risk of dropping out are counseled to remain in school;
- Identify local school division initiatives and efforts to retain and retrieve students at risk of dropping out, particularly student populations with low high school graduation rates; and
- Recommend such policy, statutory, fiscal, or regulatory changes as the Board may deem necessary to increase the high school graduation rates, particularly among student populations with high dropout rates.

To meet the requirements of the study, the BOE and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE):

- Reviewed relevant education and scientific literature;
- Reviewed VDOE current policies;
- Collected and analyzed data from the VDOE Education Information Management System (EIMS); and
- Conducted a survey of local school divisions to gather information about initiatives and efforts to retain and retrieve students at risk of dropping out of school, including counseling services.

This report provides the information requested in SJR 329, including recommendations for changes aimed at increasing the high school graduation rate across the Commonwealth.

[2] See Appendix A for a copy of the legislation.

Defining, counting, and reporting dropout statistics

Consistent with the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) definition of a dropout (Laird, DeBell, Kienzl, & Chapman, 2007), the BOE and VDOE define a dropout as an individual who:[3]

- 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; and
- Has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved educational program; and
- Does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
  - Transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program;
  - Temporary school-recognized absence due to suspension or illness;
  - Death.

Through the 2001-2002 school year, VDOE relied on the local school divisions to count the number of students who drop out of school each year. Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, VDOE began collecting records for all students enrolled in Virginia public schools through its Education Information Management System (EIMS). This system requires school divisions to report the status of all students enrolled in the public schools three times per year. Beginning in the 2004-2005 school year, VDOE implemented the use of a state testing identifier, which allows the Department to track students over time. Using EIMS, VDOE is able to identify students who exit Virginia public schools for any reason.

As of the 2006-2007 school year, the EIMS provided 36 different exit options that can be used to describe why students exited a particular school (see Appendix B). The codes provide consistent definitions that school divisions use to document why students exited school. They identify students who graduate; transfer schools; die; and students who drop out of school. School divisions are not required to use all options. There are 10 major category codes that provide basic information about why students left school. As well, some codes have subcategories that provide more detail about the reason for exiting. School divisions choose whether to code students only with major categories, or whether to code students who exit using subcategories. For example, school divisions can codes students who transfer out of the school as a transfer student (W3), or they can specify the subcategory of school the student transferred to, such as a private, non-religiously affiliated school in another state.

VDOE also requires that school divisions document students who were in membership the last day of school the previous year but did not return during the current year by October 1. These students are known as summer dropouts. For example, this code identifies students who completed the 2006-2007 school year, were expected to enroll in school in the 2007-2008 school year, but did not enroll in school in the 2007-2008 school year. If the school

[3] http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/NCLB/new_data_definitions.html#dropout

division cannot document that the student is enrolled in another school, these students are counted as dropouts in the 2006-2007 school year.

The information from EIMS is used to count students and calculate a dropout rate that is often called an event rate or an annual dropout rate. Virginia's annual dropout rate for students in grades 7-12 is published each year on VDOE's Web site at https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/. Data are available at the State, division, and school level with dropout rates disaggregated by the following student subgroups: all students, female, male, unspecified, black, Hispanic, white, Asian, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian. Aggregated division-level data are available on the Department's Web site at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm. VDOE also sends each school division a report that includes the dropout rate for grades 7-12 (the publicly reported rate) and the dropout rate calculated only for students in grades 9-12.

The annual dropout rates that are reported on the VDOE Web site are calculated using the following equation:

> Dropout rate = Total number of dropouts grades 7-12 / Fall membership grades 7-12 as of September 30.

The number of dropouts is based on data collected using EIMS. The number of students enrolled as of September 30 is the fall membership count that school divisions report in the Fall Student Records Collection. Fall enrollment figures exclude special education preschool pupils, pupils in hospitals, clinics or detention homes, and local programs such as vocational and alternative education centers, i.e., centers or schools that receive but do not officially enroll students. In calculating the dropout rate, any student that is not accounted for by October 1 automatically is counted as dropout in the previous school year. Using individual student identifiers in EIMS helps VDOE locate students that transferred to other divisions who would have otherwise been marked as a dropout. VDOE cannot independently locate students who transfer to private or home schools, or schools in other states or countries. The responsibility lies with the school division to obtain documentation for such transfer students.

Relevancy of current procedures

The question of how to define dropouts and how to calculate and report the dropout rate is not new to education. In 1985, for example, the Illinois State Task Force on Hispanic Student Dropouts stated that "the lack of uniformity in a definition has kept policy and lawmakers from understanding the nature, scope, and dimension of the dropout problem" (as cited in Morrow, 1986). In the 22 years since that comment, experts have continued to criticize the reporting of both graduation and dropout statistics as being inconsistent and inflated (Barton, 2005). As well, several experts, including the United States Department of Education's National Center on Education Statistics, have provided definitions and recommended methods to calculate dropout rates. Nonetheless, there continues to be a lack of nationwide uniformity in calculating dropout rates.

Virginia's definition of dropouts is consistent with that provided by the National Center on Education Statistics. It is also consistent with expert panel recommendations that suggest

that students for whom there is no information about their leaving school are documented as non-graduates or dropouts (National Governors Association, 2005). The National Governors Association (2005) recommends that school division records be audited to support the accuracy of the exit codes school divisions report. Although VDOE does not audit school records, VDOE uses its student-level data system to verify student movement within the state, and to conduct verification of the data VDOE collects from the local school divisions. For example, VDOE uses the student information system to verify the enrollment of students who transfer within the state, and ensure their exit codes are accurate. As well, VDOE uses the student information system to verify that students coded as dropouts are *not* enrolled in another school or division in Virginia. This latter verification can reduce the number of students counted as dropouts. However, the system also provides VDOE with a tool to ensure that all students are accounted for—all students who are enrolled in school must be accounted for in the system. If the school division cannot provide information that a student exited school for a valid reason (e.g., graduated, transferred schools, or died), VDOE considers the student a dropout. At the same time, school divisions have incentives to ensure all students enrolled in school are included in the state data system because the student counts used to calculate funding allocations for school divisions use data from the EIMS database. As such, VDOE's student record capability makes it difficult for school divisions to under-report students who leave school.

As described previously in this report, VDOE reports an annual or event dropout rate. Nonetheless, there is general consensus in the literature that calculating a cohort dropout rate is the gold standard in education (Creech, 2000; National Research Council, 2001; Neild and Balfanz, 2006). This rate provides information on the percent of students who entered ninth grade in a given year and dropped out of school without completing high school with a diploma or other credential. Experts recommend that the cohort rate be calculated for more than four years, be disaggregated and, that it be reported in a richer context of information, such as in conjunction with (Creech, 2000; Daugherty & Lord, 2005; National Research Council, 2001; Neild & Balfanz, 2006; NGA, 2006):

- Four-, five- and six-year cohort graduation rates;
- Four-, five- and six-year cohort rates for students earning completion credentials other than a diploma, e.g., GED;
- Four-, five-, and six-year cohort dropout rates;
- The percent of students who have not completed school but are still enrolled;
- Annual dropout rates; and
- In-grade retention rates.

In 2006, the Board of Education approved the implementation of a new calculation for graduation rates beginning in the fall of 2008. This rate reflects the percent of students who were first time ninth graders in 2004-2005 and graduated in the 2007-2008. (See report to the Governor and General Assembly at http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/HD812006/$file/HD81.pdf).

The percent of students who did not graduate in four years (1 – graduate rate) is *not* the percent of students who dropped out in a given year. The inverse of the graduation rate includes students who:

- Are still enrolled in school;
- Completed school with a credential other than one of the Board of Education's five approved diplomas;
- Transferred to another school/division/state; or
- Dropped out of school.

Calculating a cohort dropout rate requires the state to collect student-level data for at least four years. VDOE will have sufficient student-level data to calculate a cohort dropout rate for the first time in the fall of 2008. Calculating this rate would be complementary to the cohort graduation rate adopted by the Virginia Board of Education in 2006.

Voluntarily withdrawal from school, grades K-6

VDOE began collecting information on students who voluntarily withdrew from school in grades K-6 in the 2004-2005 school year. It was not until the 2006-2007 school year that the Department required school divisions to provide a reason that these students left school; the reasons students in grades K-6 left school in 2006-2007 were not available at the time of this writing. Figure 1 shows the number of students who voluntarily withdrew from school in grades K-6 for the two years of data that are available. Figure 2 shows that these students represent less than one percent of the total enrollment in grades K-6 in those two school years. Both figures show students who exited school and did not return during the school year and those who are considered summer withdrawals. This latter group represents students who completed the school year (e.g., 2005-2006), did not re-enroll in the subsequent school year (e.g., 2006-2007) and for whom there is no evidence that the student transferred or died.

Figure 1. Total number of students in Virginia, grades K-6, who voluntarily withdrew from school, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006.

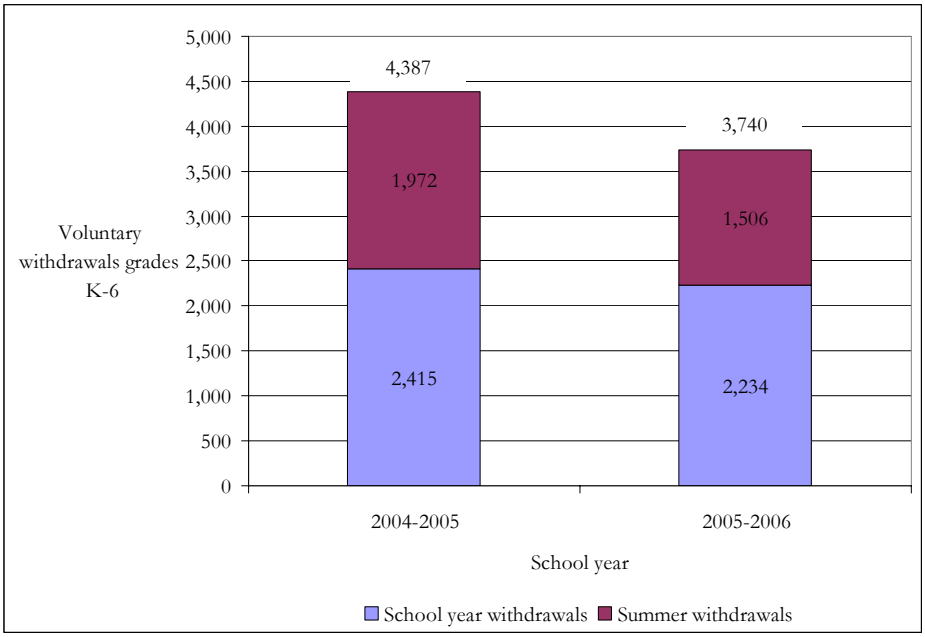
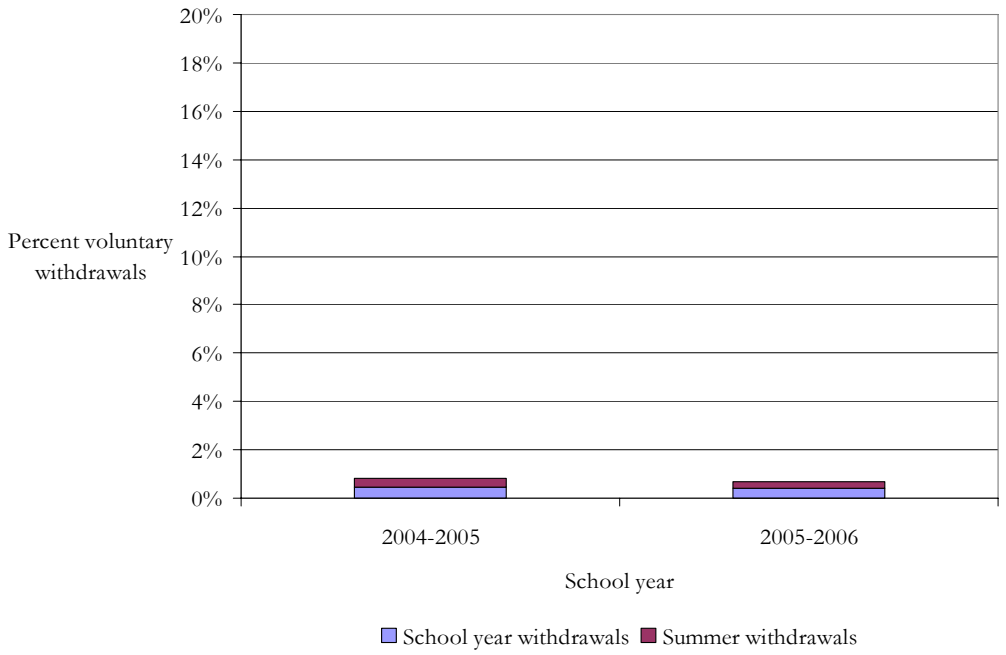


Figure 2. Percent of students in Virginia, grades K-6, who voluntarily withdrew from school, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006.



Dropout rate, grades 7-12

For grades 7-12, VDOE collects data on the number of students who dropped out annually, and the reasons they exited school. Figure 3 shows that the number of students who dropped out of school dropped by almost 1,000 students in 2004-2005, with a slight increase in numbers the following year. The event dropout rate for 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 remained the same, at 1.9 percent (see Figure 4).

Figure 3. Number of students who dropped out annually, grades 7-12.

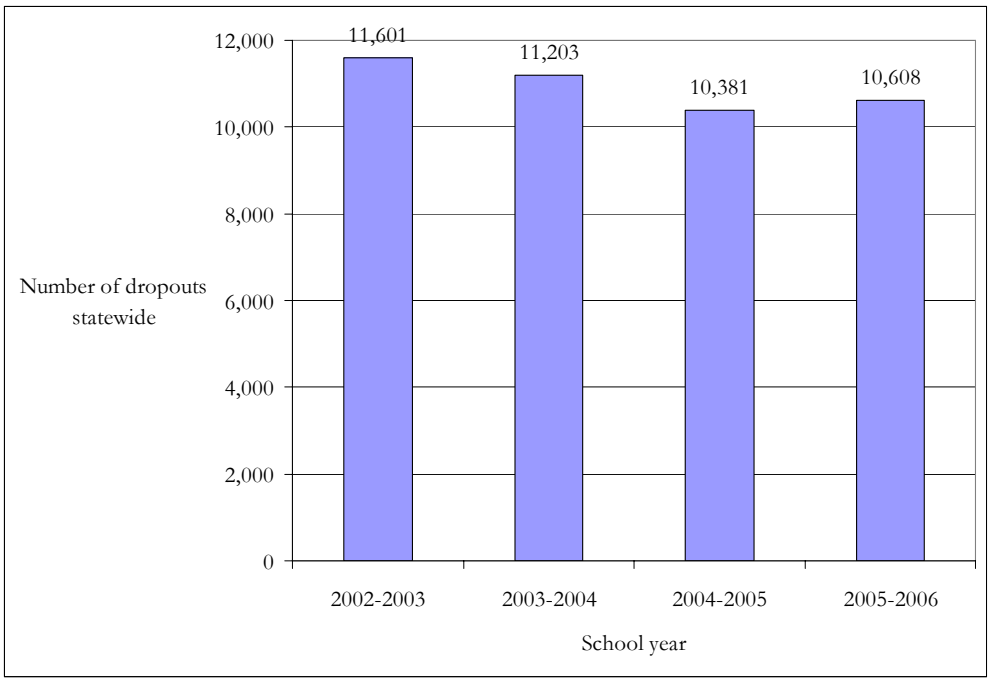
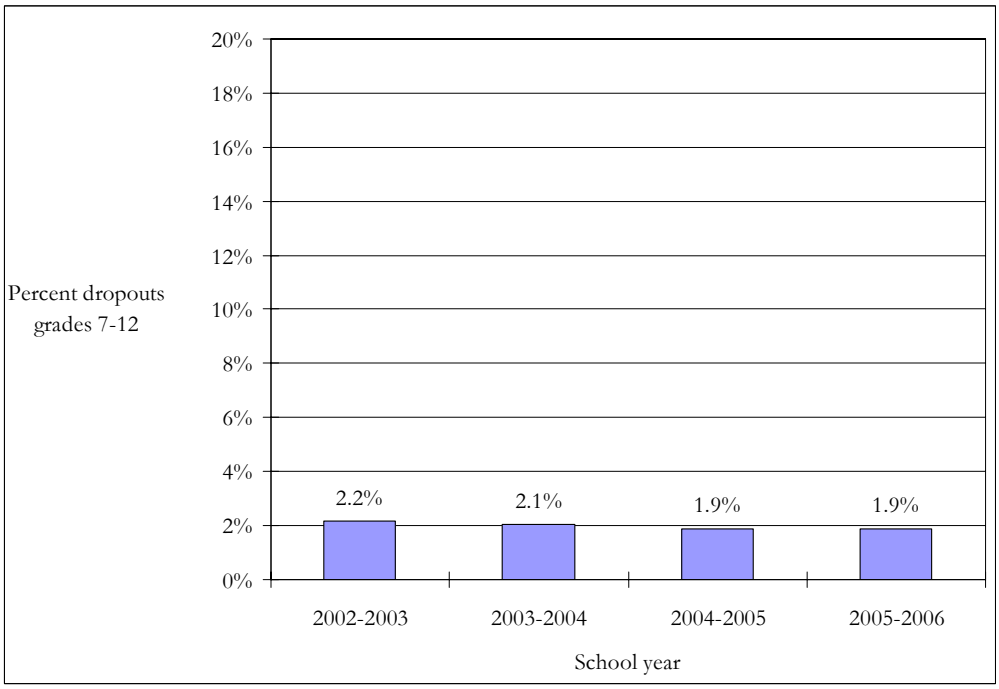


Figure 4. Event dropout rate, grades 7-12.



VDOE requires school divisions to report the reasons students dropped out of school. As shown in Figure 5 and Table 1, in each of the past three school years for which there are complete data, achievement was the most frequently reported reason for students to drop out of school, followed by moving and then behavioral reasons. Note that students

documented as dropping out because they "moved" are technically defined as students who no longer reside in the area and their status was unknown after appropriate investigation by the attendance officer (Department of Education, 2003).

Figure 5. Distribution of the reasons students in grades 7-12 dropped out of high school as recorded by the VDOE.

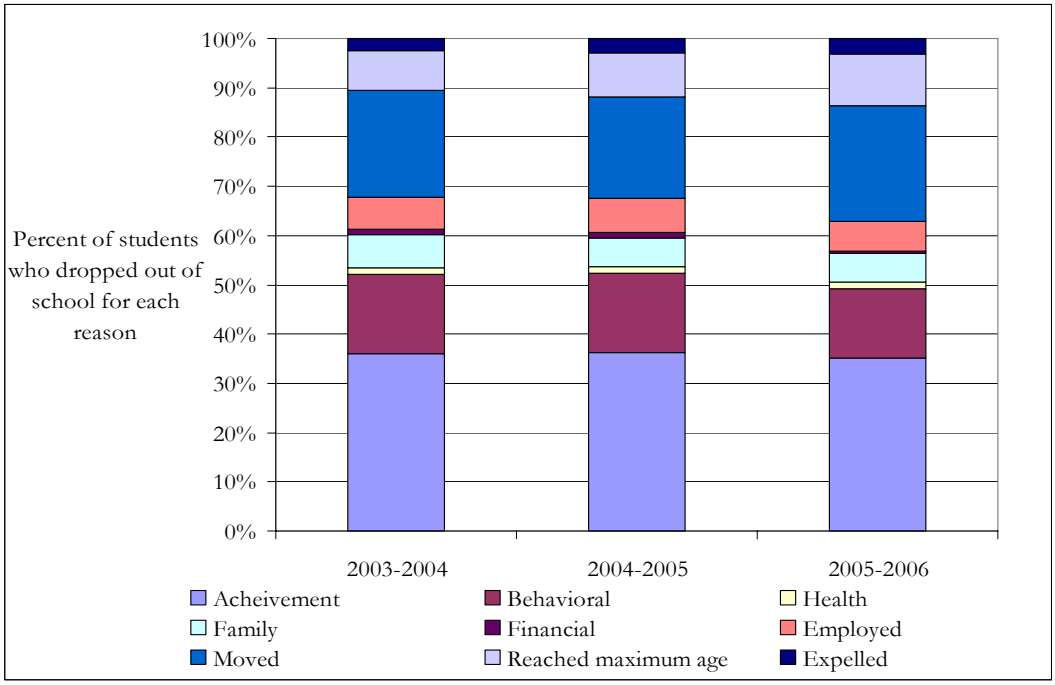


Table 1. Percent of students who dropped out of school for each reason.

	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Achievement	36%	36%	35%
Behavioral	16%	16%	14%
Health	1%	1%	1%
Family	7%	6%	6%
Financial	1%	1%	0%
Employed	6%	7%	6%
Moved	22%	20%	23%
Reached maximum age	8%	9%	11%
Expelled	2%	3%	3%

High school graduates and completers

Figure 6 shows the number of students who completed high school each year from the 2002-2003 school year, through the 2005-2006 school year. The figure shows students who earned a Board of Education approved diploma, and students who completed an alternative program and earned a credential. The number of students completing high school in Virginia has increased each year since the 2002-2003 school year. Figure 7 shows the number of students earning each type of diploma or certificate. Data show that even with increased graduation requirements in place for the 2005-2006 school year, more of Virginia's students earned standard and advanced studies diplomas each year since 2003-2004. The percent of students in grade 12 earning a diploma has remained fairly consistent at 95 percent (Figure 8).

Figure 6. Number of students who completed high school each year from the 2002-2003 school year through the 2005-2006 school year.

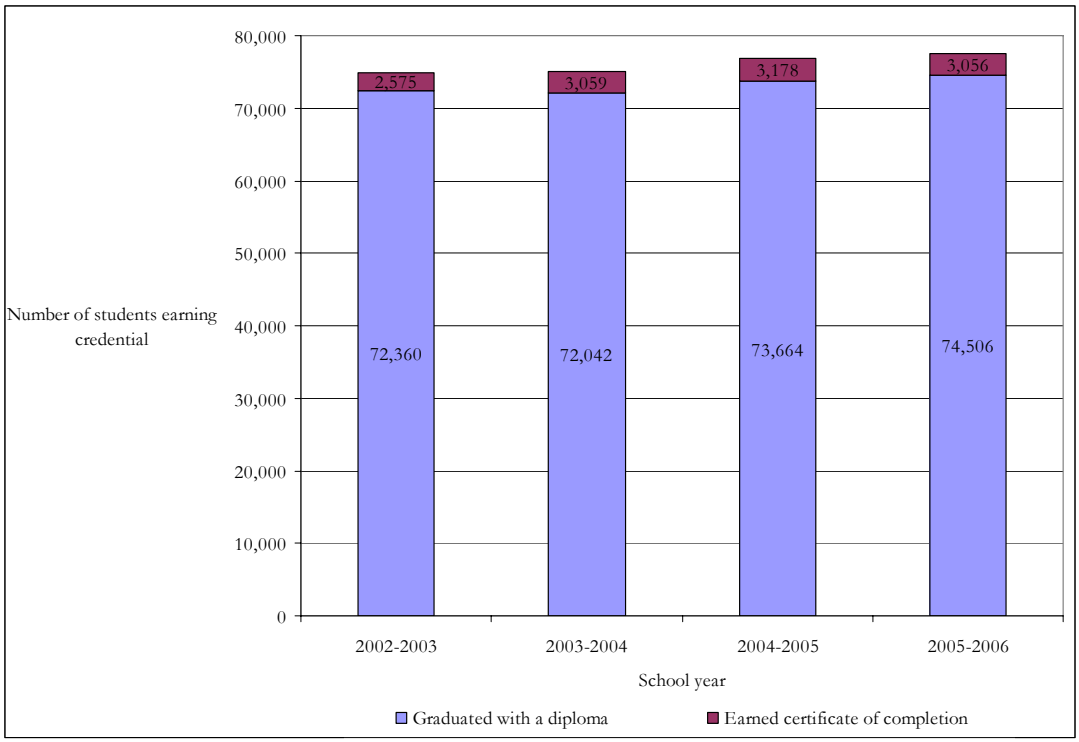
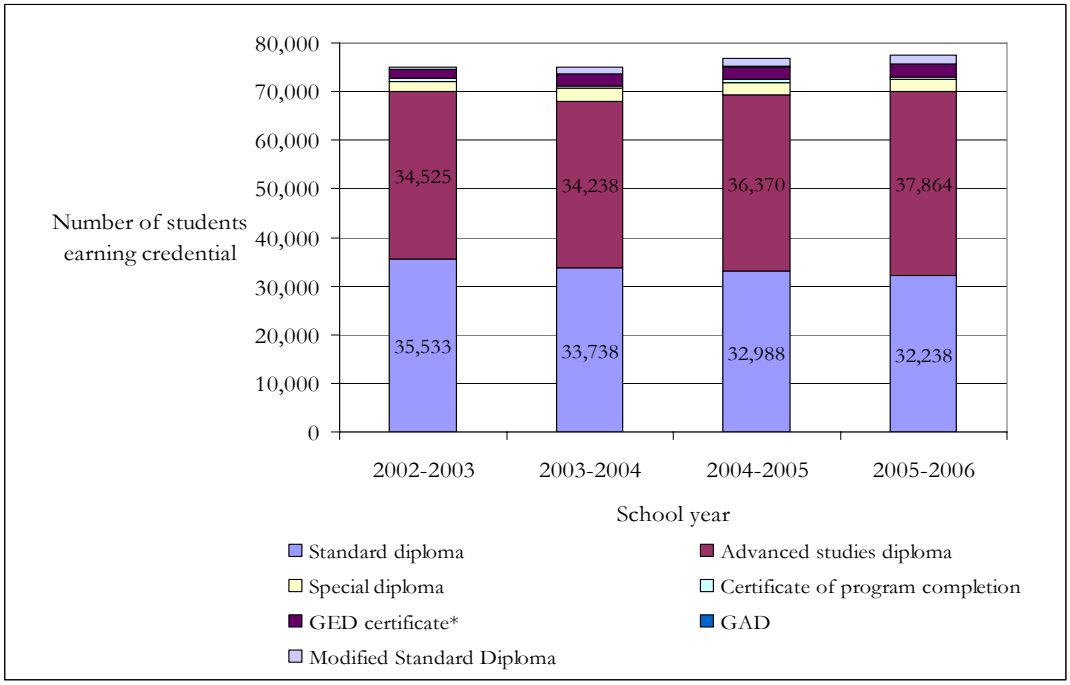


Figure 7. Number of diplomas and other completion credentials awarded from 2003-2003 to the 2005-2006 school year, disaggregated by type of credential.



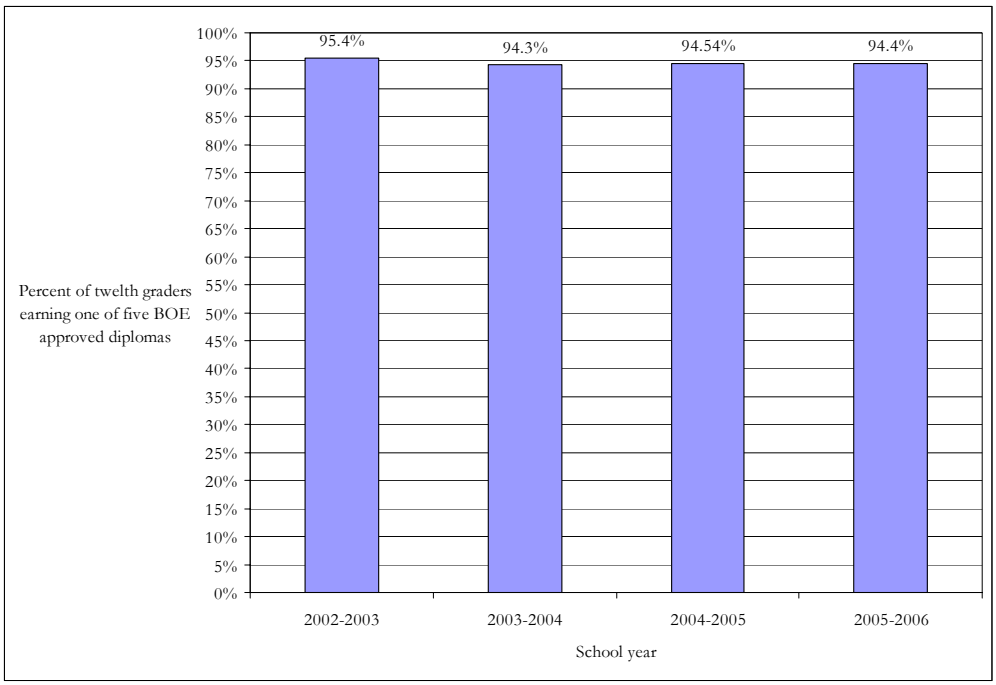
*GED and GAD were first reported separately in 2004-2005. Students earning a GED as part of an ISAEP program are included in the GED total. VDOE reports these numbers separately.

Table 2. Number of diplomas and other completion credentials awarded from 2003-2003 to the 2005-2006 school year, disaggregated by type of credential.

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Standard diploma	35,533	33,738	32,988	32,238
Advanced studies diploma	34,525	34,238	36,370	37,864
Special diploma	1,942	2,630	2,585	2,471
Certificate of program completion	682	646	571	513
GED certificate*	1,893	2,413	2,607	2,543
GAD	NA	NA	15	34
Modified Standard Diploma	360	1,436	1,706	1,899
Total	74,935	7,5101	76,842	77,562

*GED and GAD were first reported separately in 2004-2005. Students earning a GED as part of an ISAEP program are included in the GED total. VDOE reports these numbers separately.

Figure 8. Percent of students in grade 12 who earned a diploma.



Programs and services provided to students at-risk of dropping out and who dropped out of school

SJR 329 required the Board of Education to report information related to counseling services available to students at risk of dropping out and who dropped out and returned to school, and information about school division efforts to keep more students in school. VDOE does not regularly collect this information, and developed a survey to collect data from school divisions to meet the requirements in this report.

In response to the request from VDOE, 85 percent of the 132 school divisions responded to the survey. The 2005-2006 dropout rate for students in grades 7-12 in school divisions that responded ranged from 0.0 to 5.15, compared to a range of 0.0 to 6.81 for divisions that did not respond. There was no statistically significant difference in dropout rates between school divisions that completed the survey and school divisions that did not complete the survey. As well, school divisions from all of the State Superintendent's regional study groups responded to the survey; school divisions that did not respond were distributed across the state.[4]

In providing programs and services to students at risk of dropping out, experts recommend identifying students at-risk of dropping out early in their careers (Creech, 2000; National Research Council, 2001; Jerald, 2006). This enables schools to target resources more effectively, and tailor the approach to their students' individual needs. There is general consensus that dropping out is a process of disengaging from the social or academic aspects of school, or both, and students on a path to drop out tend to give warning signals. Nonetheless, identifying the most likely students to be on a pathway towards dropping out is a challenge. Two recent studies (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; Neild & Balfanz, 2006) were successful in developing statistical models that identify students likely to be at risk of dropping out. This has allowed Chicago and Philadelphia school districts to use the information from the statistical models to target resources to schools and students in the most need. Comparable models have not yet been developed at the state level.

In Virginia, most schools use individual referrals to identify students who are at risk of dropping out of school. Thirty-eight (38) percent of school divisions that responded to the VDOE survey reported using a checklist or other tool in high school as a method of identifying students who are at-risk of dropping out. Divisions reported that similar checklists are used in 30 percent of middle schools and 22 percent of elementary schools. About half of divisions using these tools reported that they have evidence to support the tool as an accurate predictor of students who will drop out.

Counseling for at-risk students and students who dropped out

Counseling is considered a critical component of dropout prevention strategies and for helping students who have already dropped out return to and remain in school (National Research Council, 2001). In response to VDOE's survey, all responding school divisions

[4] School divisions that did not respond to the survey represented seven of the eight regional study groups. The distribution was fairly even across these seven groups.

reported that at least one method of counseling is available to middle and high school students who are at risk of dropping out of school. In elementary school, 97 percent of divisions reported that counseling is available. Table 3 shows the percent of responding school divisions who reported the availability of different types of counseling for students at risk of dropping out of school.

Table 3. Percent of responding school divisions that provide different types of counseling for students who are at risk of dropping out of school.

Type of counseling available to students at risk of dropping out of school	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
Individual counseling for at risk students	83%	95%	99%
Employment counseling	5%	24%	82%
Transition counseling	26%	54%	80%
Classroom guidance centered around career exploration	71%	84%	68%
Group counseling for at-risk students	54%	65%	58%
Classroom guidance centered around student decision-making	82%	82%	56%
Classroom guidance centered around student problem solving	84%	79%	50%
Other classroom guidance	18%	19%	22%
Other	9%	13%	19%

All but one division (99 percent) reported that counseling is provided by a school counselor (see Table 4). Principals and assistant principals are also available to counsel at-risk students in more than 87 percent of school divisions. School divisions also use social workers, school psychologists, and instructional staff to counsel students at risk of dropping out. Only 9 percent of school divisions reported using a dropout specialist. Thirty-seven percent of school divisions reported that counseling for at-risk students is provided by another staff member including:

- Administrative staff other than principal/assistant principal
- Alternative education staff
- At-risk liaison
- Attendance counselors
- Career and technical education teachers
- Career coaches
- Career specialists
- Case managers
- Classroom teachers
- Nurses
- Outside providers of mental health services
- Response to intervention teams
- Special education staff
- Student assistance counselors
- Counselors from partner organizations, (e.g., Department of Social Services)
- Truancy officers

Table 4. Staff members that provide counseling to students who are at risk of dropping out of school.

Staff who counsel at-risk students	Percent of Divisions
School counselor	99%
Principal	89%
Assistant principal	87%
School social worker	56%
School psychologist	54%
Other	37%
Instructional staff	35%
Dropout specialist	9%

School divisions reported separately the staff members that counsel students who dropped out and then returned to school. Responses are shown in Table 5. Nearly all school divisions provide a school counselor to students who dropped out and returned to school. Other staff members who counsel returning students include:

- Adult learning personnel
- Alternative education staff
- Attendance specialists with counseling credentials
- Case managers
- Dean of students
- Instructional staff with specialized training
- Nurses
- School-to-work/Career preparation academy coordinators
- Student assistance teams
- Substance abuse counselors
- Teachers with long history of success working with students who drop out and return
- Transitional specialists
- Youth risk prevention coordinator

Table 5. Staff members that provide counseling to students who dropped out and returned to school.

Staff who counsel students who dropped out and returned to school	Percent of Divisions
School counselor	98%
Principal	84%
Assistant principal	79%
School psychologist	47%
School social worker	45%
Instructional staff	28%
Other	20%
Dropout specialist	12%

Programs and services for students at risk of dropping out of school

A great many research studies have been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of dropout prevention programs and strategies. Although most of these studies did not use the most rigorous scientific methodology (Rumberger, 2001), the available evidence provides useful information for designing dropout prevention programs and implementing strategies. The National Center for Dropout Prevention lists 15 effective strategies in four categories of support: school and community perspectives; early intervention; basic core strategies; and effective instruction (http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/default.htm). A recent review of risk factors and exemplary dropout prevention program identified 22 categories of services and strategies in exemplary dropout prevention programs (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007). As well, that study provided the following lessons learned that can be gleaned from research on risk factors and evidence-based programs (Hammond, et al., 2007):

- The likelihood of dropping out increases as the number of risk factors increases, and prevention strategies should take this into account and target as many risk factors as possible.
- Multiple strategies should be used to help assure program impact.
- When practitioners adopt existing programs, research suggests the programs should be fully implemented and implemented as they were designed.
- The strategies chosen to support at-risk students should be evidence-based, aligned with the risk factors they need to target, and grounded in best practices.
- Strategies should be evaluated to assure effectiveness.

In response to the survey provided by VDOE, school divisions reported using a wide variety of programs and services designed to keep students in school, and retrieve students who have already dropped out of school. The percent of school divisions providing each service listed in the VDOE survey questionnaire is listed in Appendix C. In this section, we describe the types of programs and services provided at each level of schooling (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) building on categories developed by Prevatt and Kelley (2003). These researchers conducted a comprehensive and systematic review of the literature available about intervention programs designed to reduce student dropouts, and found that the specific interventions reported in the existing literature could be grouped into seven

types of strategies that dropout prevention programs use to support students:

- Academic (e.g., study skills, reading lab, tutoring);
- Mentoring (e.g., volunteer adults, peer buddy system, teacher-as-advisor);
- Monitoring children as they progress through school.
- Psycho-social skills (e.g., conflict resolution, anger management);
- School/classroom structure (e.g., reduced class size, adjusted schedules, cooperative learning);
- Teacher/parent training (e.g., behavior management, home visits); and
- Vocational/work (e.g., vocational exploration, work release).

For reporting purposes, we included a category of transition programs, which may cut across the Prevatt and Kelley categories. Table 6 shows the percent of responding school divisions at each grade level who reported providing services in each category (see Appendix C for more details).

Table 6. Percent of responding school divisions who reported providing services in each category.

Number of responding school divisions that reported offering at least one program or service for students at-risk of dropping out of school			
	Elementary School	**Middle School**	**High school**
Academic	13%	18%	58%
Community outreach/resources	77%	80%	82%
Mentoring	70%	77%	80%
Psycho-social skills	79%	95%	94%
School/classroom structure	46%	76%	97%
Teacher/parent training	84%	94%	95%
Transition program	56%	73%	71%
Vocational/work	11%	21%	74%

Academic resources

Half of the responding school divisions reported that they offer credit recovery programs to high school students. As well, several school divisions reported offering a variety of other types of academic services to at-risk students in all grade levels. Examples included:

- Commercially available academic packages developed to support at-risk students' successful completion of high school coursework;
- Partnerships with tutoring organizations (including commercial and non-profit);
- Partnerships with community colleges;
- Summer school and after-school support; and
- School-based GED services.

Community outreach and resources

The majority of responding school divisions (77 to 82 percent) reported that they integrated outreach services into all grade levels in a variety of ways. In the survey, we asked about

several specific outreach services, including referral to legal aide services; professional development designed to ensure that teachers have information about community resources available to support students who are at risk of dropping out; referrals to community advocacy groups; and coordination with businesses in the community. Respondents also reported the following other outreach services:

- Referrals to the family assistance planning team to help identify community mentors and/or in-home family counseling;
- Conducting interagency student support team meetings; and
- Implementing a truancy prevention plan developed by the locality.

Mentoring

Most school divisions offered peer-to-student or teacher-to-student mentoring, and several divisions offered both. Three school divisions also reported using mentors from outside organizations. The National Dropout Prevention Center lists mentoring as an effective dropout prevention strategy, particularly for at-risk students.

Psycho-social skills development

School divisions use a variety of strategies to support students' psycho-social skills development. These are strategies such as social skills training, discipline intervention strategies (e.g., anger management, conflict resolution), and various support services that address such issues as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, suicide prevention, and other mental and physical health needs. More than 94 percent of middle and high schools and 79 percent of elementary schools reported offering these types of services to students at risk of dropping out. Several school divisions reported that they use community resources to support students' psycho-social skills development. As well, some school divisions use commercially available products to support psycho-social skills development that were developed specifically for students who are at-risk of dropping out of school. In a recent review of exemplary dropout prevention programs (Hammond, et al., 2007), 60 percent of exemplary dropout prevent programs employed psycho-social (or *life skills)* development strategies.

School/classroom structure

Strategies for at-risk students that affect the school or classroom structure include reduced class size, adjusted or flexible schedules, cooperative learning; alternative schools or programs (e.g., Individualized Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP)); schools-within-schools and more. In response to the survey, 97 percent of high schools reported using at least one of these strategies. Three quarters of the divisions employ at least one strategy to affect school or classroom structure in middle schools, and just less than half of elementary schools employ such strategies. The General Assembly has supported this type of strategy for more than a decade—the K-3 class size reduction program provides funds to school divisions serving substantial percentages of economically disadvantaged children for the purposes of reducing class sizes for these children. This program was established in 1995. As well, the General Assembly established Virginia's regional alternative education centers in 1994 to provide educational options for students whose needs were not met in a traditional school setting. Further, some school divisions offer local alternative schools that provide

students an education outside of the traditional classroom setting.

Teacher/parent training

Eighty-three (83) percent of elementary schools and nearly 95 percent of responding middle and high schools employ at least one type of teacher/parent training strategy in support of students at-risk of dropping out of school. Teacher training may involve strategies such as providing professional development focused on student-centered instruction or classroom management; improved communication between teachers within grades, between grades, and between schools, and more. The National Dropout Prevention Center lists teacher training as one of several core strategies in their list of 15 effective dropout prevention strategies. Divisions reported that they provide professional development focused on ensuring that teachers are equipped with instructional methods of student-centered instruction in 81 and 86 percent of middle and high schools, respectively, as part of their efforts to support students at risk of dropping out. Seventy-three (73) percent of divisions reported using this approach in elementary school.

Parent training may involve home visits, child behavior management programs, and approaches that increase parents' involvement in their children's education. The National Dropout Prevention Center and the recent study on exemplary programs (Hammond, et la., 2007) list these interventions as effective strategies for dropout prevention.

Transition program

The transition from elementary to middle school and the transition from middle to high school are considered potential "tripping points" for students—that is, key time points that can impact a students' likelihood of dropping out of school. In response to the survey, 29 and 36 percent of elementary and middle schools, respectively, reported offering a transition program for students moving from elementary to middle school. Forty-nine (49) and 56 percent of middle and high schools, respectively, reported providing a transition program for students moving from middle to high school. Transition programs for ninth grade students have been shown to be effective in increasing graduation rates as they provide specialized programming to students who are making the difficult transition to high school (Bottoms, 2006; Letgers, & Kerr, 2001; Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenburg, 2001). There is evidence that the transition from elementary to middle school is "bumpy" for many students (see Mullins & Irvin, 2000, for a review), however there is scant evidence to support the effectiveness of transition programs from elementary to middle school as effective dropout prevention strategies.

Vocational/work

The majority of responding school divisions (74 percent) reported that they offer career and workforce development opportunities to high school students at risk of dropping out. In Virginia, career counseling is required as part of the ISAEP program. Fewer elementary and middle schools used these types of strategies (11 and 21 percent, respectively). An evaluation of dropout prevention strategies (Rossi, 1993) suggested that effective dropout prevention strategies include a vocational or career component for students in grades 6 and higher.

Populations with high dropout rates

The National Center for Education Statistics (Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2001) reports that:

- The dropout rate for students from the lowest 20% of all family incomes is six times that of their peers from families in the highest 20%.
- The dropout rate for Asian/Pacific Islander youth is 4% compared with 28% for Hispanics, 13% for blacks and 7% for whites.

VDOE asked school divisions whether they provide any unique services to student populations that have high dropout rates. Several school divisions noted that they provide the same range of services to all students in need. Nearly half of school divisions reported that they provide unique services targeted to a particular population in every level of school. The percent of divisions offering programs were fairly evenly distributed across different populations. Survey results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Percent of responding school divisions that provide unique services to student populations that have high dropout rates.

Group targeted	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Unique services to at least one population group	44%	48%	52%
Students with disabilities	36%	30%	36%
Students with limited English proficiency	24%	29%	33%
Students identified as disadvantaged	25%	29%	32%
Black	16%	20%	22%
Hispanic	15%	19%	22%
Other	12%	11%	16%

Other groups who were provided targeted services include:

- Males
- Females
- Pregnant teens and students with children
- Students identified as at risk due to academic achievement concerns (e.g., D's and F's in prior years).

School divisions described offering the following specific services to target groups:

- Substance abuse counseling from certified professionals
- Minority achievement counselors
- Counselors in the High Intensity Language Training (HILT) program for English language learners
- Career and transition services for students with disabilities
- Translators for English language learners
- Advocates for English language learners
- Girl Power program for middle school girls
- Coordination with rehabilitative services to support students with disabilities
- Group counseling conducted separately for minority males and minority females

- Peer and teacher advisors for students who are parents
- Alternative school for pregnant teens and young women who have children
- College partnership programs
- Diversity counseling
- Bullying prevention
- Parent liaisons
- Parent support and information sessions
- Partnerships with community service organizations
- Efforts to assist students from economically disadvantaged families prepare for college, such as the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia's (SCHEV) Gear-up/ACCESS program.

Programs and services for students who dropped out and have returned to school

VDOE requested separate information from school divisions about the programs and services provided to students who dropped out and then returned to school. Most school divisions involve the courts, and nearly all provide counseling related to alternative education programs to high school students. Responses are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Activities reported in an effort to bring students who have dropped out back to school.

Activities to bring students back to school	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
Counseling on alternative programs (GED, night school, GAD[1])	12%	38%	95%
Court involvement	76%	84%	86%
Assignment of a truancy officer	55%	64%	69%
Assignment to a school social worker	46%	51%	51%
Other	10%	12%	19%

[1]General Achievement Diploma

School divisions reported a variety of other methods to bring dropouts back to school, including:

- Truancy teams;
- Interagency teams (e.g., family assistance planning teams);
- Community counselors;
- Media advertisements and announcements;
- Involvement of other government partners (e.g., Department of Social Services, Sheriff's office); and
- Community service organizations.

Once students return to school, school divisions use a variety of strategies to keep them in school and help them be successful. Table 9 shows the activities school divisions reported in their efforts to bring students who have dropped out back to school, using the categories based on Prevatt and Kelley's (2003) work described earlier.

Table 9. Percent of responding school divisions who reported providing services in each category to students who have dropped out and returned to school.

	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
Academic	3%	13%	50%
Community outreach/resources	60%	73%	83%
Mentoring	39%	56%	66%
Psycho-social skills	34%	51%	59%
School/classroom structure	25%	54%	59%
Teacher/parent training	56%	70%	83%
Transition program	29%	54%	56%
Vocational/work	4%	13%	66%

Most services for students who dropped out and returned to school are provided in high school. In addition to these services, several school divisions also reported unified programs that integrate approaches to keeping students in school. Some of these programs involve commercially available support packages, and many involve other community resources, such as community service organizations and partner government agencies. Several school divisions offer returning students flexible opportunities at alternative schools. Some of these schools do not offer State of Virginia diplomas, but do provide students a path to earning an alternative completion certificate, for example through the ISAEP program or other programs that provide students the opportunity to earn a GED certificate. Less than one percent of responding divisions that have high school dropouts[5] did not report providing any services to high school students who drop out and return to school.

Twenty (20) percent of responding school divisions did not report that they provide any services to students in elementary grades who drop out of school, and 11 percent of responding divisions did not report providing services to middle school students who dropped out and returned to school. Many of these school divisions commented that they have no dropouts in the lower grades, or that they have not had students drop out and return to school in elementary and middle grades.[6] This partially explains the lower percentage of divisions providing services in elementary and middle schools. Several school divisions further commented that truancy officers typically get involved if students in the lower grades do not come to class.

[5] Note that a few divisions do not report any dropouts in grades 7-12. In 2005-2006, Craig County, Highland County, and West Point reported no dropouts.
[6] Technically, Virginia does not include students who leave in grades K-6 as dropouts.

Recommendations

1. Beginning in 2008, the Virginia Department of Education should report both the annual and cohort dropout rates.
   a. The annual rate should be reported as the rate of student dropouts in grades 7-12 and grades 9-12 to provide a more complete picture of high school dropouts. The primary purpose of continuing to report the annual dropout rate is to facilitate a comparison with previous years' data.
   b. The cohort rate should provide information on the 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year dropout rates.
2. Dropout rates should be published in the context of other information, including
   a. Graduation rates;
   b. Completion rates that includes graduates and students who earn an alternative (non-diploma) completion credentials; and
   c. A 'remain in school' rate for years 5 and 6.
3. The Board of Education should support initiatives that encourage schools and school divisions to verify the status of students who exit Virginia public schools.
4. The Department of Education should continue to partner with other stakeholders, such as the Department of Juvenile Justice, to develop strategies for dropout prevention, and provide training opportunities to school staff and others who work to prevent or recover dropouts.
5. The General Assembly should continue to support programs targeted at increasing the graduation rate, such as Project Graduation.
6. The BOE should encourage school divisions to provide professional development related to dropout prevention and recovery to help teachers and other professionals who work with at-risk students provide stronger support services.

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Appendix A: Senate Joint Resolution 329

Requesting the Board of Education to study high school dropout and graduation rates in the Commonwealth. Report.
Agreed to by the Senate, February 6, 2007
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2007

WHEREAS, national leaders, state governors, and the business community have focused attention on the declining high school graduation rate, and the No Child Left Behind Act, Title I, Part H, established the school dropout prevention program to increase high school graduation rates; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Education estimates that every day 5,000 students drop out of school before graduation; and

WHEREAS, the National Governors Association (NGA) in its newly released report, "Graduation Counts: A Report of the NGA Task Force on State High School Graduation Data," indicated that "high school reform is at the forefront of the national and state education agendas; however, the quality of data concerning graduation and dropout rates is alarmingly poor, exceptionally difficult to track accurately, and often grossly inaccurate and misleading"; and

WHEREAS, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) analyzed the National Center on Education Statistics' data on dropout rates and stated in its report, "Dreams Deferred: High School Dropouts in the United States," that "dropouts comprise nearly half of the heads of households on welfare, and a similar percentage of the prison population"; and

WHEREAS, Focus Adolescent Services cited the following dropout statistics: (i) students in large cities are twice as likely to leave school before graduating than nonurban youth; (ii) more than one in four Hispanic youths drop out and nearly half leave by the eighth grade; (iii) Hispanics are twice as likely as African Americans to drop out. White and Asian American students are least likely to drop out; (iv) more than half the students who drop out leave by the tenth grade, 20 percent quit by the eighth grade, and three percent drop out by the fourth grade; (v) nearly 25 percent changed schools two or more times, with some changing for disciplinary reasons; (vi) almost 20 percent were held back a grade, and almost one-half failed a course; (vii) almost one-half missed at least 10 days of school, one-third cut class at least 10 times, and one-quarter were late at least 10 times; (viii) eight percent spent time in a juvenile home or shelter; (ix) one-third were put on in-school suspension, suspended, or put on probation, and more than 15 percent were either expelled or told they could not return; and (x) 12 percent of dropouts ran away from home; and

WHEREAS, in February 2005, the Educational Testing Service released its report, "One-Third of a Nation: Rising Dropout Rates and Declining Opportunities," in which it stated that one-third of students are leaving high school without a diploma, high school completion rates have not been accurately reported, and, from 1990 to 2000, the graduation rate declined in all but seven states and the rate declined by eight percent or more in 10 states; and

WHEREAS, the Educational Testing Service also reported that "there is a shortage of guidance counselors available to work with students at risk of dropping out and their families, the opportunity for dropouts to resume education and training is diminishing, the earning power of

high school dropouts has been in almost continuous decline over the past three decades, and the United States ranks 10th in the world in high school completion rates"; and
WHEREAS, the personal and social costs of dropping out of school have increased, and the gap between dropouts and more educated people is widening as opportunities increase for more highly skilled workers and all but disappear for the less skilled; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that high school dropouts will earn $200,000 less than high school graduates and more than $800,000 less than college graduates during their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, truancy, health conditions, poor academic performance, substance abuse, family dysfunction, behavioral problems, crime, and other sociocultural issues influence the dropout rate; and

WHEREAS, declining graduation rates present significant challenges to the stability of the nation's and the Commonwealth's social and economic global standing and ability to maintain a competitive advantage among industrialized nations; and

WHEREAS, federal agencies and nationally recognized organizations have directed states' attention to the need to address the declining graduation rate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Board of Education be requested to study high school dropout and graduation rates in the Commonwealth. In conducting its study, the Board of Education shall (i) evaluate the relevancy of the current process and procedures for defining, counting, and reporting school dropout statistics and consider the need for revisions in such process and procedures and compliance by school divisions; (ii) determine the number of students who dropped out of school before the seventh grade and the reasons therefor and the number of students who graduated annually, for school years 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006; (iii) ascertain whether, by whom, and the manner in which students at risk of dropping out are counseled to remain in school; (iv) identify local school division initiatives and efforts to retain and retrieve students at risk of dropping out, particularly student populations with low high school graduation rates; and (v) recommend such policy, statutory, fiscal, or regulatory changes as the Board may deem necessary to increase the high school graduation rates, particularly among student populations with high dropout rates. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Board of Education for this study, upon request.

The Board of Education shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2007, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2008 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's Web site.

Appendix B: Exit withdrawal codes allowed by the Virginia Department of Education to document students who leave school.[7]

(Required) Short Exit/Withdrawal Code	(Optional) Long Exit/Withdrawal Code	Exit/Withdrawal Definition
W1	W115	Transfer to another room in the same school - A student who transfers to another room within the same school.
W1	W118	Transfer to a special education program from regular education program within the school - A student who transfers to a special education program within the same school from a regular education program during the school year.
W1	W119	Transfer to regular education program from special education program within the same school - A student who transfers during the school year to a regular education program from a special education program within the same school.
W2	W201	Transfer to a public school in the same local education agency - A student who transfers to a public school that is located within the administrative boundaries of the same local education agency.
W2	W212	Transfer to a charter school in the same local education agency - A student who transfers to a charter school, operated in accordance with state regulations, within the same local education agency.
W2	W214	Matriculation to another school within the same local education agency - A student who enters another school after successful completion and promotion from the highest instructional level of the current school to the next higher level.
W2	W217	Transfer to homebound instruction - A student who transfers to a period of homebound instruction provided by the local education agency.
W2	W218	Transfer to a special education program from regular education program that is located within the same local education agency - A student who transfers to a special education program that is located within the same local education agency.

[7] http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Publications/student-coll/exit_withdrawal_codes.xls

(Required) Short Exit/Withdrawal Code	(Optional) Long Exit/Withdrawal Code	Exit/Withdrawal Definition
W2	W219	Transfer to regular education program from special education program that is located within the same local education agency - A student who transfers during the school year to a regular education program from a special education program within the same local education agency.
W2	W221	Transfer from an Individualized Student Alternative Education Program (ISAEP) to a regular education program in a school within the same local education agency - A student who discontinues involvement in an ISAEP and transfers to a regular education program in a school within the same local education agency.
W2	W222	Transfer to home-based instruction - A student who transfers to a period of home-based instruction provided by the local education agency.
W3	W304	Transfer to a private, non-religiously-affiliated school in the same local education agency - A student who transfers to a private school (operated by a non-governmental, non-religious group or organization) that is located within the administrative boundaries of the same local education agency, including hospital teaching programs.
W3	W305	Transfer to a private, non-religiously-affiliated school in a different local education agency in the same state - A student who transfers to a private school (operated by a non-governmental, non-religious group or organization) that is not located within the administrative boundaries of the same local education agency but is in the same state, including hospital teaching programs.
W3	W306	Transfer to a private, non-religiously-affiliated school in a different state - A student who transfers to a private school (operated by a non-governmental, non-religious group or organization) that is located in another state, including hospital teaching programs.
W3	W307	Transfer to a private, religiously-affiliated school in the same local education agency - A student who transfers to a private school (affiliated with and operated by a non-governmental, religious group or organization) that is located within the administrative boundaries of the same local education agency, including hospital teaching programs.

(Required) Short Exit/Withdrawal Code	(Optional) Long Exit/Withdrawal Code	Exit/Withdrawal Definition
W3	W308	Transfer to a private, religiously-affiliated school in a different local education agency in the same state - A student who transfers to a private school (affiliated with and operated by a non-governmental, religious group or organization) that is not located within the administrative boundaries of the same local education agency but is in the same state, including hospital teaching programs.
W3	W309	Transfer to a private, religiously-affiliated school in a different state - A student who transfers to a private school (affiliated with and operated by a non-governmental, religious group or organization) that is located in another state, including hospital teaching programs.
W3	W310	Transfer to a school outside of the country - A student who transfers to a school outside the country that is not a United States overseas dependents school (includes private and public school systems). Students who leave the United States are not considered to be dropouts even if the school district cannot document the student's subsequent enrollment in school.
W3	W312	Transfer to a charter school that is not located within the administrative boundaries of the same local education agency but is in the same state- A student who transfers to a charter school, operated in accordance with state regulations, that is not located within the administrative boundaries of the same local education agency but is in the same state.
W3	W313	Transfer to home schooling - A student who transfers to a period of instruction in a home environment for reasons other than health.
W3	W314	Transfer to public post-secondary education institution in Virginia - A student who withdraws to enter a public post-secondary program of instruction or institution of higher education in Virginia and is not concurrently enrolled in a school in the local education agency.
W3	W320	Transfer to a private post-secondary education - A student who withdraws to enter a private post-secondary program of instruction or institution of higher education and is not concurrently enrolled in a school in the local education agency.
W4	W402	Transfer to a public school in a different local education agency in the same state - A student who transfers to a public school that is not located within the administrative boundaries of the same local education agency but is in the same state.

(Required) Short Exit/Withdrawal Code	(Optional) Long Exit/Withdrawal Code	Exit/Withdrawal Definition
W4	W411	Transfer to a state-operated institution - A student who transfers to a state-operated institution that has an educational program. This includes mental health institutions, correctional institutions, juvenile service agencies, care shelters, and detention facilities.
W4	W412	Transfer out of a state-operated institution - A student who transfers out of a state-operated institution. Use this code if no other code applies. This code can only be used by mental health institutions, correctional institutions, juvenile service agencies, care shelters, and detention facilities.
W5	W503	Transfer to a public school in a different state - A student who transfers to a public school that is located in another state or to a United States overseas dependents school.
W5	W520	Transfer to post-secondary education outside of Virginia - A student who withdraws to enter a post-secondary program of instruction or institution of higher education outside of Virginia and is not concurrently enrolled in a school in the local education agency.
W6	W650	Death - A student whose membership is terminated because he or she died during or between regular school sessions.
W7	W730	Graduated with diploma - A student who has received a standard, advanced studies, International Baccalaureate or other type of diploma upon completion of state and local requirements for both coursework and assessment.
W7	W731	Completed school with other credentials - A student who has received a GED, certificate of completion, or other credential in lieu of a high school diploma.
W7	W732	Completed grade 12, but did not pass required test(s) - A student who has completed the state and local coursework requirements for graduation but has not met the assessment requirements.
W8	W880	Discontinued schooling - A student who stops attending school and is considered to constitute "dropping out."
W9	W960	Withdrawn after being absent fifteen (15) consecutive days for extended illness - A student who left school for an indefinite period of time because of a physical, extended illness and is expected to return to school.
W9	W961	Suspension exceeding 15 days - A student who left school involuntarily due to a school-approved suspension that exceeded 15 days and is expected to return to school.

(Required) Short Exit/Withdrawal Code	(Optional) Long Exit/Withdrawal Code	Exit/Withdrawal Definition
W9	W970	Withdrawn after being absent fifteen (15) consecutive days - A student who has been absent for fifteen (15) consecutive days who is expected to re-enter school. At the end of the school year, a student who has not returned to school should be recoded to the appropriate exit/withdrawal type.
W0	W016	Withdrawal to enter Individualized Student Alternative Education Program (ISAEP) - A student who withdraws from school and enrolls in a GED preparation program as a part of an ISAEP as defined in *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-254.D and Board of Education guidelines. A student in an ISAEP will maintain this withdrawal code until he or she exits the program. A student in an ISAEP shall be counted in the membership and average daily membership (ADM) of the local education agency.

Appendix C: Percent of school divisions responding to individual items on the VDOE survey.

1a) How does your school division identify students at risk of dropping out of school?

	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
Refers at-risk students to the school counselor or to an administrative leader in the school	73%	86%	90%
Uses a checklist or other tool	22%	30%	38%
Identifies students who are at-risk of dropping out, but does not use a unified approach	22%	23%	24%
Does not identify students as being at risk of dropping out	17%	2%	1%

1b) If your school division uses a checklist or other tool that identifies students who are at risk of dropping out, does your school division have evidence that supports the tool as an accurate predictor?

Tool is validated	17%
Tool is NOT validated	17%
Unknown about validation of tool	11%

2) What programs and services are provided to students who are at risk of dropping out of school that are specifically focused on keeping students in school?

	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
Outreach services	50%	58%	58%
Peer-to-peer mentoring	20%	31%	43%
Teacher-to-student mentoring	69%	73%	76%
Professional development specifically focused on helping school personnel identify potential dropouts	30%	42%	52%
Professional development focused on ensuring that teachers are equipped with instructional methods of student-centered instruction	73%	81%	86%
Professional development specifically focused on ensuring teachers have information about community resources available to support students who are at risk of dropping out	36%	39%	46%
Schools-within-schools for at risk students	7%	21%	32%
Reduced student-teacher ratio for students identified as at-risk for dropping out	29%	39%	49%
A transition program for students moving from elementary to middle school.	47%	46%	NA
A transition program for students moving from middle to high school	NA	67%	72%
Flexible programs and schedules (e.g., evening classes; study blocks; extra class periods)	29%	48%	71%
An alternative school that offers a high school curriculum and gives students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma	13%	32%	72%
Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP)	13%	28%	91%
Credit recovery programs	NA	NA	58%
Career and workforce development opportunities, such as a school-to-work program	11%	21%	74%
Discipline intervention programs	56%	74%	69%
A deliberate approach to improving the school climate to improve the safety and orderliness of the school	71%	79%	76%
A deliberate approach to involve families in the students' education	70%	79%	82%
Referrals to advocacy organizations for students and families	56%	63%	63%
Referrals to legal aide organizations for students and families	24%	26%	28%
Coordination/collaboration with businesses and non-profit organizations	41%	52%	63%
Support services to address substance abuse, teen pregnancy and young parenthood, suicide prevention, and other mental and physical health issues.	53%	81%	85%
Other	8%	9%	21%

3) What methods of counseling are provided to students who are at risk of dropping out of school?

	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
Individual counseling for at risk students	83%	95%	99%
Employment counseling	5%	24%	82%
Transition counseling	26%	54%	80%
Classroom guidance centered around career exploration	71%	84%	68%
Group counseling for at-risk students	54%	65%	58%
Classroom guidance centered around student decision-making	82%	82%	56%
Classroom guidance centered around student problem solving	84%	79%	50%
Other classroom guidance	18%	19%	22%
Other	9%	13%	19%
No specific counseling targeted to students who are at risk of dropping out	9%	4%	1%

4) What staff members are responsible for counseling students at risk of dropping out?

Staff credentials	Percent of divisions
School counselor	99%
Principal	89%
Assistant principal	87%
School social worker	56%
School psychologist	54%
Other	37%
Instructional staff	35%
Dropout specialist	9%

5) Do you provide any unique services to student populations in your school division who have high dropout rates?

	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
No	56%	52%	48%
Yes (please check all that apply)	44%	48%	52%
Students with disabilities	36%	30%	36%
Students with limited English proficiency	24%	29%	33%
Students identified as disadvantaged	25%	29%	32%
Black	16%	20%	22%
Hispanic	15%	19%	22%
Other	12%	11%	16%

6) What activities does your school division conduct to retrieve students who have dropped out—that is, to bring them back to school?

	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
Counseling on alternative programs (GED, night school, GAD)	12%	38%	95%
Court involvement	76%	84%	86%
Assignment of a truancy officer	55%	64%	69%
Assignment to a school social worker	46%	51%	51%
Other	10%	12%	19%

7) What programs and services does your school division provide to students who have dropped out and returned to school?

	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
Outreach services	30%	46%	57%
Peer-to-peer mentoring	13%	21%	33%
Teacher-to-student mentoring	40%	56%	65%
Professional development specifically focused on helping school personnel identify potential dropouts	23%	34%	45%
Professional development focused on ensuring that teachers are equipped with instructional methods of student-centered instruction.	46%	59%	68%
Professional development specifically focused on ensuring teachers have information about community resources available to support students who are at risk of dropping out	28%	31%	41%
Schools-within-schools for at risk students	5%	18%	28%
Reduced student-teacher ratio for students returning to school after dropping out	13%	19%	31%
A transition program for students moving from elementary to middle school.	29%	36%	NA
A transition program for students moving from middle to high school	NA	49%	56%
Flexible programs and schedules (e.g., evening classes; study blocks; extra class periods)	13%	36%	66%
An alternative school that offers a high school curriculum and gives students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma	7%	28%	72%
Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP)	8%	28%	86%
Credit recovery programs	3%	13%	50%
Career and workforce development opportunities, such as a school-to-work program	4%	13%	66%
Discipline intervention programs	34%	51%	59%
A deliberate approach to involve families in the students' education	47%	54%	71%
Referrals to advocacy organizations for students and families	38%	44%	57%
Referrals to legal aide organizations for students and families	18%	26%	30%
Coordination/collaboration with businesses and non-profit organizations	22%	32%	49%
Student support services to address substance abuse, teen pregnancy and young parenthood, suicide prevention, and other mental and physical health issues.	32%	58%	76%
Other	25%	7%	6%

8) What staff members are responsible for counseling students who dropped out and are returning to school?

Staff credentials	Percent of divisions
School counselor	98%
Principal	84%
Assistant principal	79%
School psychologist	47%
School social worker	45%
Instructional staff	28%
Other	20%
Dropout specialist	12%

9) What methods of counseling are provided to students who dropped out and returned to school?

	Elementary School	Middle School	High school
Individual counseling for at risk students	71%	83%	94%
Employment counseling	4%	26%	79%
Transition counseling	20%	44%	75%
Classroom guidance centered around career exploration	46%	56%	56%
Classroom guidance centered around student decision-making	59%	61%	50%
Classroom guidance centered around student problem solving	59%	60%	50%
Group counseling for at risk students	37%	50%	49%
Other classroom guidance	12%	12%	10%
Other	10%	9%	10%