

Each Child On Track

Success Story: Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools



Introduction

What does it take to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, have the support and resources they need to graduate from high school with a regular diploma? This Success Story highlights the work that five Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools (DOPRs) are doing to build the capacity and infrastructure needed to implement an early warning system and better support students with disabilities to remain in high school and graduate with a regular diploma.

EACH CHILD ON TRACK

Ohio's State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), *Each Child On Track*, builds the capacity of district and school personnel to implement an early warning system and provide universal, targeted, and intensive supports in attendance, academics, and behavior. *Each Child On Track* is led by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce and implemented through Ohio's State Support Teams (SSTs). SSTs work with district and school personnel to embed *Each Child On Track* in the Ohio Improvement Process and support implementation at the building level.

Ohio's Dropout Prevention and Recovery Schools

DOPRs serve students ages 14 to 21 who have not been successful in traditional schools and who often face a range of challenges. Students attending DOPRs are often behind in their coursework and have experienced challenges outside of school, such as trauma, substance abuse, or family crises that affect their academic progress. Many also have significant responsibilities outside of school, including caregiving and employment. These schools offer flexible schedules and individualized programs, providing an alternative pathway to graduation. Exhibit 1 summarizes the five DOPRs participating in *Each Child On Track*.

A Dropout Prevention and Recovery School in Ohio is a public community school designed for students who are at risk of not graduating or who have already left school and want to return.

Exhibit 1. Snapshot of DOPRs Participating in *Each Child On Track*

School Name	<i>Each Child On Track</i> Cohort	Number of students	Number of students with disabilities	Students with disabilities graduating with a regular diploma in 2024–25
Canton Harbor High School	4	106	31	18.75%
Early College Academy	3	87	17	55.56%
FLEX High School Cleveland	3	153	51	35.71%
Marshall High School	3	392	77	42.65%
Old Brook High School Parma Campus	4	249	57	50.68%

Note. Data are from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce website (<https://www.edresourcesohio.org/oec/publicProfileSummary.php>).

Marshall High School

Marshall High School focuses on improving graduation rates by closely monitoring student progress and providing timely, tailored supports. Because many students face challenges with attendance and course completion, school leaders sought an efficient approach to determine how to intervene when students struggle in these areas.

Developing a Data-Driven Tiered System

Marshall’s *Each Child On Track* team developed a tiered system of intervention and supports that includes four groups differentiated by the intensity and type of support provided. Students who attend regularly and make steady academic progress require minimal support, whereas students with attendance challenges or slower credit accumulation receive targeted supports from teachers. Students who struggle with both attendance and coursework are assigned intensive, coordinated interventions, including family outreach and individualized planning. Students with more significant needs, including very low attendance and little to no academic progress, receive intensive, system-level supports led by administrators, such as home visits. By organizing students into groups with shared needs, the system makes the work more manageable for teachers, enabling them to focus their efforts and more clearly identify priorities for support.

To define these groups, the team established thresholds based on students' attendance and credit accumulation. For example, school leaders determined that attending at least 3 days a week is sufficient for students to remain on track for graduation, and they use this threshold as an indicator of attendance risk. Similarly, the team identified the number of credits that students must earn over time to stay on track, using these benchmarks to flag students at risk of falling behind and assign them to appropriate intervention groups. These decision rules also enable staff to identify and address risks earlier, shifting from reactive responses to more proactive, data-informed supports.

"... [a tiered approach to intervention] makes it doable for the teachers ... they can look at this one list and say 'Okay, here's where my goals are.' Before [the tiered groups], we had all 387 students ... I mean, they all need something, but they didn't necessarily all need the same thing, right?"

– School Leader

Aligning Supports to Students' Needs

The team designed interventions based on the characteristics of each group to create a continuum of support. The tiered groups guide both the intensity of support and the staff responsible for providing it. For example, lower intensity supports may include teacher outreach and phone calls to families, whereas higher intensity supports involve family meetings, administrative involvement, and, in some cases, home visits by school leadership. This structure enables staff to coordinate their efforts when students face more significant or systemic barriers. It also supports shared ownership across staff, enabling educators to escalate support when initial strategies are not effective.

"I would say part of [the impact of *Each Child On Track*] is getting the whole staff involved ... everybody knows what this program is and why it's important for us to keep track of the students."

– School Leader

Within each group, staff tailor supports to students' individual needs, including addressing barriers such as housing or food insecurity that may require administrative involvement. Educators also build on students' interests to promote engagement in school. For example, one student who was struggling academically became more engaged after a career and technical education teacher linked coursework completion to continued participation in a career pathway program.

"While we do have that academic need, a lot of our students are those who have more intensive needs socially and emotionally. [It's important to address these needs] because if they're not connected there, we are not going to get the academic input or have students who want to come to the building."

– School Leader

Looking ahead, Marshall High School is continuing to strengthen its data-driven approach by enhancing its data-tracking system and building staff capacity to take full ownership of these processes. School leaders are prioritizing broader staff engagement in monitoring student progress, including increasing the involvement of career and technical education teachers to ensure a shared understanding of student needs across the building. The team plans to further refine its intervention practices, using data to guide supports that address both academic progress and barriers to engagement.

FLEX High School Cleveland

Staff at FLEX High School Cleveland prioritize building strong relationships as the foundation for supporting students who are often behind in credits and face a wide range of challenges outside of school. Through *Each Child On Track*, school leaders implemented a whole-school approach to monitoring student progress and supporting students.

“... relationships come first. . . . We have to develop relationships first.”

– School Leader

Building a Relationship-Driven System to Support Student Progress

School leaders focus on engaging students in goal setting while tracking attendance and credit accumulation. Each student is assigned a mentor teacher, typically their homeroom teacher, who monitors their academic progress and engagement in school. Students meet individually with their mentor every 2 weeks to set goals for the next 2 weeks. In addition, students write daily goals that support progress toward their larger objectives, such as completing assignments, checking in with teachers, or dedicating time to coursework. This approach helps students break larger academic goals into manageable steps and build planning and self-monitoring skills. Staff track both students' engagement in goal setting and their follow-through, along with attendance and credit accumulation.

The school uses a system of sticky notes to promote a shared understanding of students' goals, progress, and level of support needed. Each day, students write three goals for that day on a sticky note, which educators use to start conversations about their progress. This system enables any staff member to quickly identify students' goals and engage them in purposeful conversations. For example, students receiving Tier 2 (i.e., targeted) supports are required to complete daily check-in and check-out meetings with their mentor teacher. As a result, educators have become more intentional in their interactions with students.

“... so what we're working on now is teachers walking around a little more purposefully and saying [for example], 'I see that you have [a goal related to] English 9 on here. . . . What are you doing with English 9?' . . . and making them strengthen some of those goals.”

– School Leader

Using Data to Monitor Progress and Guide Supports

In addition to the sticky-note system, the team developed a more formal approach to monitoring student progress, using decision rules adapted for their student population. The school maintains a shared spreadsheet that lists all students and includes information about their weekly progress in credit accrual, goal writing, and attendance. Teachers update the spreadsheet weekly, and the building leadership team meets every 4 weeks to review student progress and assign appropriate interventions. Students are identified as needing additional support if they do not meet established thresholds for attendance, goal setting, or credit attainment over time. This process enables staff to systematically identify students who are falling behind, adjust supports, and coordinate interventions across the team.

Looking ahead, school leaders are focused on strengthening the systems and practices established through *Each Child On Track*. They are continuing to build staff capacity, particularly in refining how educators guide goal setting and respond to student data. The team is also working to expand and strengthen its Tier 2 and Tier 3 (i.e., intensive) interventions to better meet the diverse needs of students.

Canton Harbor High School

Canton Harbor High School staff have focused on strengthening how they use data to support students' progress toward graduation, particularly in attendance, behavior, and course completion. Although the school already had teams focused on graduation, literacy, and multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), as well as data-tracking practices in place, leaders viewed *Each Child On Track* as a way to bring greater structure and coherence to this work. Rather than replacing existing systems, *Each Child On Track* serves as an overarching framework that aligns the school's teams, reduces silos, and helps ensure that work across teams supports priorities outlined in the school's One Plan.

"Each Child On Track became that overall umbrella for what we do. We didn't dissolve our goal committees—it just became the driver for all of them. It was a nice fit into what we were already starting to do."

– School Leader

Aligning Teams and Systems to Support Student Progress

Through *Each Child On Track*, the Canton Harbor team refined its data-tracking systems to more intentionally monitor student progress over time. Staff use spreadsheets to track credits earned each quarter, attendance patterns, and behavior and course-level performance indicators, enabling them to identify trends and flag students who may be at risk. Teams meet quarterly to review student progress, with more frequent monitoring for students approaching graduation. During these reviews, staff conduct a quick status check for all students to determine whether they are on track or at risk, followed by more in-depth discussions focused on students requiring additional support. These data reviews guide conversations with students and help staff assign targeted supports.

*"So the piece that we've added that was new . . . was the attendance piece. [Before *Each Child On Track*], we hadn't had it really tied into the other [early warning indicators]. . . . Now . . . we're really looking at attendance and how that is affecting or not affecting course completion."*

– School Leader

Using Data to Guide Decision-Making and Supports

Each Child On Track also supported staff in using data to develop a more integrated understanding of student performance across indicators. After identifying students as on track or at risk in each course, school leaders examine patterns in attendance and behavior to better understand factors that may affect course completion. These analyses inform conversations with students and guide efforts to address barriers that may limit their progress toward graduation.

Based on these data reviews, the Canton Harbor team implements targeted interventions to address key areas of need. These include literacy supports, such as a phonics-based reading program, and attendance strategies such as “Check and Connect,” for which all staff are being trained. The school also uses positive reinforcement strategies to motivate students, including recognition activities tied to credit completion goals.

“We’re implementing [a phonics intervention] at the high school level. . . . And we’ve seen some pretty promising student outcomes.”

– School Leader

Looking ahead, school leaders emphasized the importance of sustaining and formalizing the systems developed through *Each Child On Track*. This includes documenting processes to support consistency over time, refining how staff use data to identify student needs, and strengthening intervention practices. School leaders also described maintaining a whole-school approach, with shared responsibility for monitoring student progress and addressing identified barriers.

Old Brook High School Parma Campus

Staff at Old Brook High School Parma Campus began *Each Child On Track* with strong data systems and a commitment to using data to support students. Rather than building new structures, the school used *Each Child On Track* to increase intentionality in how the team analyzes data and translates it into action.

“*Each Child On Track* has definitely made us far more intentional . . . we had data, but we hadn’t always put aside the time to analyze it and then make next steps.”

– School Leader

Re-engaging Students Through Career Pathways

Through *Each Child On Track*, staff focused their efforts on seniors who were not yet on track to graduate, including students with disabilities. The team reviewed attendance and credit data for individual students using a graduation planning tool that calculates whether students are likely to complete remaining credits given the number of instructional days left in the school year. This tool is visible to both staff and students and clarifies how daily attendance and course completion contribute to graduation timelines. School leaders identified a group of seniors who were not on track to graduate at the beginning of the year and assigned each student a staff mentor to provide regular check-ins and support course progress and engagement.

To motivate students who were off track, the team used access to career pathways as a key strategy. The school has a strong career and technical education focus, offering pathways such as health care, construction, hospitality, business, and advanced manufacturing. Traditionally, students had to meet

attendance and credit requirements to enroll in these programs. As part of *Each Child On Track*, the team piloted an alternative approach for seniors who were off track but expressed strong interest in a specific pathway. In these cases, school leaders allowed students to enroll in a career pathway with the expectation that participation would improve attendance and engagement.

"If this student really has a passion for culinary, what happens if we give them a chance, knowing they need to improve their attendance to be in the program? Would this turn them around from off track to on track? And it has."

– School Leader

Staff monitored attendance and credit progress closely to determine whether access to career pathways helped students move back on track.

The approach showed promising early results, and staff emphasized that career pathways provided a meaningful incentive. Nearly all students in this group of seniors remained enrolled in school, a notable outcome in a dropout prevention and recovery context.

Implementing Interventions and Supports to Promote Course Completion and Engagement

Old Brook Parma also aligned its intervention practices with an MTSS framework. Universal supports include biweekly check-ins that address attendance, course progress, behavior, and social-emotional needs. These check-ins are shared across staff to ensure that follow-up is a collective responsibility rather than being limited to a single role. For students struggling to finish coursework, the school implemented "Course Closers," a strategy in which teachers identify students who are close to completing a course and provide focused support to help them finish key assignments. When students do not complete coursework through Course Closers, intervention staff provide additional individualized supports to help them finish.

To support behavior and engagement, Old Brook Parma partnered with an external mentoring program, using *Each Child On Track* funds to provide an alternative to exclusionary discipline. Rather than relying on suspensions, students participate in mentoring and restorative conversations focused on understanding behavior, setting goals, and building executive functioning skills. Staff reported that this approach has contributed to decreased suspensions and increased student engagement.

"... our number of suspensions has dropped drastically. ... Rather than just jumping to suspension, we're looking at alternatives to ... mitigate behavior."

– School Leader

Old Brook Parma plans to sustain and deepen this work by strengthening collaboration among academic staff, intervention specialists, and career and technical education teachers. The school has begun holding regular joint meetings to better align support for students with disabilities enrolled in career pathways. School leaders also noted plans to continue refining instructional strategies and maintaining intentional use of data to ensure that students receive timely support aligned with their academic and career goals.

Early College Academy

Through *Each Child On Track*, Early College Academy prioritized strengthening how staff use data to identify student needs and organize interventions, while also building collective ownership among staff for monitoring and supporting student progress, particularly for students most at risk of not graduating, including students with disabilities.

Using Early Warning Meetings to Drive Data Based Decisions and Interventions

Early College Academy deepened its use of data to organize and monitor interventions more intentionally. Because students do not attend school on Fridays, staff use this time to hold weekly early warning meetings that include teachers, counselors, and support staff. During these meetings, staff review student -level data related to attendance, course performance, behavior, and contextual factors outside of school, such as family responsibilities, work obligations, and other barriers to engagement. Staff track both individual student progress and the effectiveness of interventions, enabling the team to assess what is working and make adjustments as needed. Staff noted that these discussions are now more consistently grounded in specific data rather than general impressions, helping the team to identify needs and determine appropriate supports more clearly.

“... they have a spreadsheet for talking about individual students in those core areas that we’re looking at—the academics, behavior, and attendance, and even to a large extent, what’s going on with the student outside of school.”

– SST Consultant

Using “Champions” and Shared Ownership to Support Students

A key feature of Early College Academy’s approach is the use of “champions.” When a student is identified as needing additional support, a staff member who already has an established relationship with the student volunteers to serve as that student’s champion. Champions check in with the student, help coordinate supports, and report progress to the team. In this way, champions connect individualized support with the team’s ongoing data review during weekly meetings.

Each Child On Track has also supported a more intentional focus on students with disabilities. While students with disabilities were previously monitored primarily by special education staff, they are now discussed alongside students without disabilities during early warning meetings. This shift has increased shared ownership of these students among all staff. It has also helped school leaders shift from a focus on basic compliance with special education regulations to a stronger emphasis on supporting students with disabilities in making progress toward graduation and accessing appropriate interventions to help them complete their course requirements.

“There’s definitely a very intentional focus now on students with disabilities, where before, like a couple years ago . . . all of their information was monitored by the special education coordinator. And now [students with disabilities] get talked about with all of the students [and] all of the staff.”

– SST Consultant

In addition to refining meeting structures and data use, Early College Academy strengthened its intervention system. Using *Each Child On Track* funds, the school expanded academic intervention supports, increased Friday tutoring opportunities, and enhanced mental health and social-emotional services. These supports are tailored to address both academic needs and challenges outside of school, including housing instability, childcare responsibilities, and work obligations. Staff described the school's approach as highly individualized and responsive to the complex needs of its students.

Looking ahead, school leaders and State Support Team members expressed confidence that weekly data meetings, shared ownership among staff, and structured intervention processes will be sustained beyond the grant period. These practices have become embedded in the school's routines. At the same time, school leaders are working to determine how to sustain key supports, including staff time and intervention resources, as grant funding concludes.

Conclusion

This Success Story highlights how DOPRs, which serve students who have often not been successful in traditional settings, are strengthening systems to better support students with disabilities in staying engaged in school and earning a regular high school diploma. These schools provide flexible schedules and individualized supports to address the complex needs of their students. Across schools, educators and leaders are using data more intentionally to monitor attendance, course performance, and engagement, while refining intervention structures to respond to students' individual needs. Rather than replacing existing practices, *Each Child On Track* helps schools focus their efforts, clarify decision rules, and strengthen collaboration among staff. Through strategies such as tiered intervention systems, formalized mentoring, and increased alignment with career pathway opportunities, participating DOPRs are building more coherent and responsive early warning systems. As implementation continues, these schools plan to further refine data use, strengthen instructional and engagement strategies, and sustain these systems over time to ensure that students receive supports that keep them engaged and on track toward graduation with a regular high school diploma.