Each Child On Track Success Story: Celina City Schools

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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 one school district is doing to build the capacity and infrastructure needed to implement an early warning system and to better support students with disabilities so that they stay in high school and graduate with a regular diploma.

> **EACH CHILD ON TRACK**
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> 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 the areas of 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 in participating schools.

District Context

> "We were definitely working hard at the high school [prior to Each Child On Track]. But this helps us with [using] a comprehensive approach so that we are looking at all students all the time and somebody's not going to fall through the cracks, because we constantly have an eye on that data."
>
> —District Leader

Celina City Schools is a mid-sized district located in western Ohio with approximately 2,800 students. Prior to joining Cohort 3 of Each Child On Track in August 2024, district leaders had been working with coaches from State Support Team 6 (SST 6) to improve graduation rates for students with disabilities and to implement systems to identify and monitor students with disabilities who are at risk for dropping out. District leaders saw Each Child On Track as an opportunity to continue to improve and formalize this work to better support all students, including students with disabilities. In their first year of Each Child On Track, district leaders developed processes for reviewing attendance, behavior, and course performance data to identify students who are off track for graduation. District leaders also improved implementation of interventions and supports to

promote student engagement in school. The Each Child On Track team reviews attendance, behavior, and course performance data each quarter and shares that information with the high school leadership team and teacher-based teams.

SCHOOL SNAPSHOT (2024–25)

- School district typology: 4 (i.e., small town with high student poverty and average student population size)
- Number of students (Grades 9–12): 730
- Number of students with disabilities (Grades 9–12): 131 (17.95%)
- Number of English learners (Grades 9–12): 36 (4.93%)
- Number of students who are economically disadvantaged (Grades 9–12): 333 (45.62%)
- Racial makeup of high school: White (n = 615, 84.25%), Black ($n \leq 10$), Latino (n = 37, 5.07%), Asian ($n \leq 10$), Native American ($n \leq 10$), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (n = 47, 6.44%), and Multiracial (n =21, 2.88%)
- Percentage of students with disabilities graduating with a regular diploma in 2021–22: 69.05%

Note. Data are from Ohio Department of Education and Workforce websites (https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Frequently-Requested-Data; https://www.edresourcesohio.org/oec/publicProfileSummary.php).

Impacts of Each Child On Track in Celina City Schools

Supporting Students With Check and Connect

The high school has begun implementing Check and Connect as an intensive intervention for students who are identified as being off-track in attendance, behavior, and course performance. Check and Connect is a dropout prevention strategy that focuses on using mentorship to enhance student engagement in school. Several high school teachers have completed Check and Connect training through the University of Minnesota. These mentor teachers support students during the school's intervention and enrichment period by engaging in supportive conversations and problem-solving related to the students' attendance, behavior, and course performance.

> "It's really another person who's going to love on them—to love these children and push them to succeed, let them know that they're valued and that they can do anything that they want in life if they try... It's the main thing—it really is about relationships."
>
> —District Leader

District leaders match students with mentors based on a variety of factors including existing relationships, students' home life, and teachers' personality. In addition to the most intensive level of support, district leaders are exploring implementing a modified, less intensive version of the intervention for students who are showing fewer signs of risk for dropout.

Focusing on Implementation Fidelity and Sustainability

SST 6 coaches are working with school and district staff on developing processes to support fidelity of implementation and sustainability of the early warning system and of Check and Connect. For example, the team developed an intervention profile that provides key information about Check and Connect, including

- when a student receives the intervention,

- how the team will measure improvement,

- how the team will measure fidelity and levels of implementation, and

- how the intervention fits within a continuum of tiered supports.

Documenting this information supports a shared understanding among staff about how implementation should occur and fosters consistent and systematic implementation.

In addition, to support high-quality implementation of the intervention, district leaders identified a lead Check and Connect mentor who is an expert on the program and who supports other teachers with mentoring students. Finally, district leaders are planning to provide training for more staff in using the early warning system dashboard, including training fifth- through eighth-grade teachers. Together these strategies are helping district leaders to create a sustainable process for identifying and supporting students who are identified as being off track for graduation.

> "[The SST coach] is definitely leading us and … reminding us that we've got to get better with our interventions and make that process an enduring process … that it can't be just dependent on if I'm sitting in this chair … it's got to be an enduring process that lives beyond us sitting here."
>
> —District Leader

> "…I was able to kind of reimagine [the role] of one of the intervention specialist positions … and she's gone through the mentor training … and she's definitely an expert on the [Check and Connect] program. … She's that first person that helps support the mentors at the high school."
>
> —District Leader

Improving Career Exploration

As part of Each Child On Track, district leaders have worked to improve the career advising policy and have begun to strengthen career exploration opportunities across the curriculum. For example, district leaders are working to incorporate career exploration within the curriculum pacing guides so that when teachers are planning lessons, they have guidance on how to discuss careers related to the lesson or unit topic. District leaders also are developing a plan for providing professional development for teachers on career advising and career exploration. Finally, they are considering strategies for making graduation plans more useful for students, families, and teachers.

> "…One of the activities that we've done has been working on our career advising plan … looking at our policy and then designing our K–12 plan and embedding that career exploration and career awareness into our curriculum and other components too."
>
> —District Leader

Conclusion

This Success Story highlights the use of an early warning system in Celina City Schools to identify and support students who are off track for graduation. The district has begun implementing the Check and Connect intervention to support students who are most at risk for dropping out. In addition, the district is working to improve career advising and exploration supports for students.

Going forward, district leaders plan to expand the use of early warning data to students in lower grades. They will also continue to bolster career advising and exploration and implement a multi-tiered system of supports model that aligns with the early warning system. With the help of SST 6, Celina City Schools has used Each Child On Track to develop a comprehensive approach to help ensure that students stay on track for graduation.