Each Child On Track Success Story

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 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 the areas of attendance, academics, and behavior. Each Child On Track is 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.

District Context

This small district, located in northeastern Ohio, has three buildings – one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school for students in Grades 9 to 12. The small size of the district means that school and district leaders have personal connections with most of the students and families in the school.

In this district, Each Child On Track is led by a team that includes the high school principal, guidance counselor, Education Management Information System (EMIS) coordinator, director of curriculum and instruction, and the special education director. This team works closely with the SST and shares data and implementation progress with the larger district leadership team. The focus of the team's work has been building an equitable process to assign and deliver interventions to students who are identified as at risk for not graduating.

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).

Developing an Intervention Inventory

As part of Each Child On Track, all participating districts are required to develop an intervention inventory. With guidance from the SST, district leaders determined that the first step for creating a more systematic and equitable process for providing interventions was to create an intervention inventory. The team began by reviewing and documenting the interventions that staff were currently using to assist students who were having difficulties in academics, behavior, or course performance. The team found that many effective practices are in place for students who are identified as at-risk, including home visits, check-ins with adults, assistance with making up missing assignments, the use of student success plans, and counseling services, among other supports.

> "'…we took a step back and looked at our students and [asked ourselves] 'what can we do [to improve our graduation rate]?' And what we found is, we were doing a lot of it. We just didn't have the systems … [in place]."
>
> —District Leader

After reviewing and documenting these interventions, the team drafted an intervention inventory document that lists available interventions for attendance, behavior, and course performance. For each of these early warning areas, the team grouped the interventions across three tiers of support (i.e., Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3). In addition to identifying the tier of support and the intervention title, the inventory document includes information about the availability of the intervention (e.g., whether the intervention is available to all or selected students) and details about the administration and logistics of the intervention.

Establishing a Process for Monitoring Interventions and Supports

Despite having many effective interventions in place for students who are identified as at-risk, the team lacked a consistent process for assigning students to interventions or monitoring the success of interventions. Personnel often relied on their own judgement about when a student required an intervention as well as which intervention would be most appropriate for a student's needs. Further, the team did not have a consistent process for monitoring the effectiveness of interventions or tracking the numbers of students accessing an intervention.

> "'…their process had always been kind of a case-by-case basis for what interventions they might put in place for students. [Each Child On Track] has been a formalization and an organization of the things that they have in place."
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> —SST Implementation Team Member

To help implement a more systematic process, the team created an Early Warning Indicator (EWI) spreadsheet for tracking student intervention assignments and monitoring student progress. The EWI spreadsheet lists all students and all available interventions, and it includes fields to indicate whether a student is at-risk based on early warning data. In addition, the spreadsheet allows the team to document the student's intervention assignment and record anecdotal notes about the student's progress. The team plans to use this spreadsheet to monitor the effectiveness of interventions overall and track changes in students' at-risk status over time. Additionally, the team plans to use information from this spreadsheet to develop a more consistent approach to assigning students to interventions based on an understanding of the effectiveness of interventions for students with similar needs.

Facilitating Data-Driven Conversations

One impact of Each Child On Track has been broadening the involvement of district personnel in decision making about how to best support students. The district's Each Child On Track team brings together individuals who have a range of knowledge and skills that enable the team to be effective. For example, the district's EMIS coordinator has knowledge related to the district's data collection processes and can readily access and analyze data for the team. The district's guidance counselor and special education supervisor have knowledge of effective intervention practices for students with

> "[Each Child On Track] forced us to have time set aside, have data in by a certain date … and to have more people at the table."
>
> —District Leader

disabilities and the school's principal ensures that the team's decisions are implemented. Additionally, several team members have personal knowledge of students and families and can provide the background information needed to better understand the context behind changes in student performance. Having this diverse set of knowledge and skills has helped the team successfully lead Each Child On Track.

The team's increased use of data as part of Each Child On Track has uncovered areas for improvement that were not recognized previously by district leaders, including challenges with chronic absenteeism and course failures in Algebra 2. The SST provides coaching and guidance to assist team members with using data and developing processes for providing interventions to students who are identified as at-risk. The team meets quarterly, at least one week after grades are due, which allows team members to review data independently before meeting with the team. Team meetings focus on improving systems, celebrating improvements in student performance, and planning how to best support students.

Conclusion

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 better support students with disabilities to remain in high school and graduate with a regular diploma. Prior to joining Each Child On Track, this district had many effective practices in place, yet district leaders lacked a systematic process for assigning students to interventions and monitoring the effectiveness of interventions. Each Child On Track has allowed district leaders to formalize the district's processes for providing interventions to students and monitoring their response to the intervention. In addition, district leaders have established an effective Each Child On Track team and improved the team's ability to use data for decision making. Each Child On Track has provided a mechanism for this district to build upon the work that they were already doing to support all students, including students with disabilities, to stay on track for graduation.

> "This program [Each Child On Track] can be successful and impactful, even if your beginning data isn't horrible … [the district is] still seeing … steps forward in regard to this work, even though they weren't starting from a really bad place."
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> —SST Implementation Team Member