

# Each Child On Track Success Story

## Introduction

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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

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Centerburg, a small district located in central Ohio, has one combined middle and high school for students in Grades 6 to 12. Due to the small number of staff, many teacher-leaders and administrators have multiple leadership roles within the district, including serving on committees, mentoring students, and coaching sports teams, among other roles. State Support Team (SST) members provide ongoing coaching to build the capacity of district personnel and have strong relationships with many school and district staff. District leaders view Each Child On Track as a way to implement a consistent structure for the district leadership team, building leadership team, and teacher-based teams to meet, share information, and implement data-driven supports for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are at risk for not graduating.

## SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

- School district typology: 3 (Small town with low student poverty and small student population size)
- Number of students (Grades 9–12): 297
- Number of students with disabilities (Grades 9–12): 30
- Number of English learners (Grades 9–12): Less than 10
- Number of students economically disadvantaged (Grades 9–12): 81
- Racial makeup of high school: White ( $n=270$ ), Black ( $n<10$ ), Latino ( $n<10$ ), Asian ( $n<10$ ), Native American ( $n=0$ ), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander ( $n=0$ ), Multiracial ( $n=19$ )
- Percentage of students with disabilities graduating with a regular diploma in 2020–21: 73%

*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>) and the external evaluation of Each Child On Track.

## Expanding the Use of Student Success Plans

One of the first areas that district leaders addressed through Each Child On Track was the use of student success plans. In September of the 2023–24 school year, school leaders collaborated with parents, guidance counselors, and teachers to develop a student success plan for each senior who was at risk of not graduating based on the early warning data. Success plans included a variety of supports to keep students on track for graduation, such as mentoring, career advising, and academic tutoring.

After these plans were written for seniors, school leaders expanded the use of student success plans to all high school students who were at risk. To facilitate this process, school leaders worked with grade-level teams to develop criteria to determine when a student requires Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports in the early warning areas of attendance, behavior, and course performance. In addition, grade-level teams identified and documented the interventions and supports that school staff would provide at each tier and for each grade level. This work is an ongoing process that is being led by teacher-based teams and supported by school and district leaders.

“...how can we bring that [student success plan] down to the junior, sophomore, and freshmen level?”  
—District Leader

## Focusing on Attendance

Participating in Each Child On Track has helped this district renew its focus on the importance of improving attendance for all students. Beginning in the spring of 2023, district and school leaders developed and implemented several communication strategies to emphasize the importance of attendance to everyone in the school community, including staff, students, and families. The school shared attendance data in newsletters that were sent to parents and posted on the school’s website to

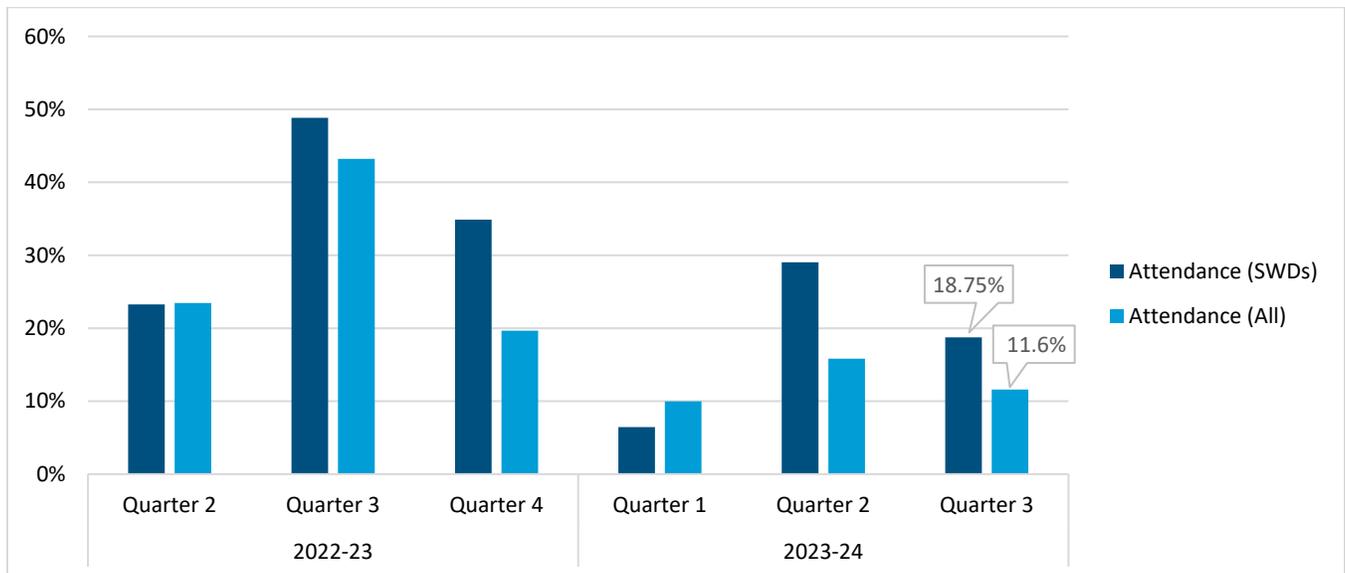
raise awareness about the importance of attendance. In addition, school and district leaders sought to highlight the importance of attendance by sharing attendance data with all staff and discussing strategies for promoting attendance, including developing positive teacher–student relationships. The district is still engaged in this communication work and district leaders view improving attendance as a community-wide initiative.

In addition, grade-level teams have focused on using attendance data to identify students who meet criteria for additional support. For example, students who had 50 hours or more of excused or unexcused absences at the end of the first semester were identified as needing Tier 2 support. Educators monitor these students frequently and provide interventions, including sending letters home, meeting with the family, and assigning teacher-mentors to check-in with students on a frequent basis. In addition, grade-level teams analyzed attendance trends and noticed that many students who were off-track in attendance also missed large amounts of instruction in middle school. As a result of analyzing and discussing these attendance data trends, school leaders have begun working with middle school staff to identify and support these students earlier.

“We assigned teacher-mentors to each one of those kids [who met the criteria for Tier 2 support in attendance] ... just to check in with them ... so that they know, ‘hey somebody at school cares about me.’ And our attendance [data] is showing that we’re making progress [because of this work].”  
—District Leader

The district has begun to see improvements in attendance this school year. District leaders attribute this positive trend to participation in Each Child On Track. Exhibit 1 shows that the percentage of students overall, and students with disabilities, who met the criteria for risk in attendance in this district has decreased during the 2023–24 school year compared with the previous school year.

**Exhibit 1. Percentage of Students Off Track in Attendance, Grades 9–12**



Note. SWDs = students with disabilities.

## The Role of the Family Liaison

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A key contributor to the successes in this district has been the involvement of the school's family liaison. The family liaison supports Each Child On Track implementation by establishing positive relationships with the highest risk students and their families and helping these students stay on track academically and behaviorally. Participation in Each Child On Track has led district leaders to elevate the importance of the family liaison role. For example, prior to Each Child On Track, the family liaison was often called upon to act as a substitute teacher or instructional aide. Now, the family liaison is a member of the district leadership team who conducts home visits, makes phone calls to families, and uses data to identify trends in student attendance and behavior data. Participation in Each Child On Track has helped the district clearly identify the need for this important work and to recognize and celebrate the value of a successful family liaison.

"...this [working to improve attendance for at-risk students] is what we wanted [the family liaison] to do from the very beginning, but we didn't have either the data or the structures or the conversations happening to empower him to do that. So as a success story, I think [our use of the family liaison] is a big one."

—District Leader

## Empowering Teachers and Improving Career Planning

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An additional area of focus of Each Child On Track efforts in this district has been improving the decision-making and communication processes used by the district leadership team, building leadership team, and teacher-based teams. One result of this work has been greater involvement of teachers in defining their professional development needs and priorities, and in identifying the preferred format in which to participate in professional learning. District leaders view this change in teacher participation and engagement as one positive outcome of participating in Each Child On Track. Teachers are actively involved in planning and delivering professional development, which has led to greater ownership and buy-in among staff.

"The ownership of the staff is really starting to catch on. ... that team approach came out of the SSIP work."

—District Leader

This district has also prioritized quality career planning to keep students engaged in high school. Through Each Child On Track, district leaders have worked to improve the district's career advising policy and have begun to embed career planning into the curriculum across all grade levels. In addition, district leaders have maintained and grown a strong connection with the county's career navigator who provides career engagement and exploration services including bringing employers to the high school to interview students for high-quality jobs. This connection with the career navigator is a valuable way to expose high school students to a range of career opportunities.

## Conclusion

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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. Through this work, the district has improved its use of student success plans, enhanced the supports provided to families and students at risk for dropout, and established structures to promote data use and multidirectional communication among staff, students, and families. Although there is much work to be done, the district is beginning to see improvement in systems, practices, and student outcomes, particularly in student attendance.