Each Child On Track
Success Story

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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? Across Ohio, students with disabilities continue to graduate at lower rates than their peers. Data from the last 2 years place Ohio within the lowest performing group of states on graduation and dropout rates for students with disabilities. Ohio's percentage of students with disabilities who graduated with a regular high school diploma in 2021–22 was 58%. Given the need to improve graduation rates for students with disabilities, Ohio has begun implementing Each Child On Track, a system-wide effort to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

EACH CHILD ON TRACK

Ohio's State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), Each Child On Track, builds the capacity of regional systems of support to assist districts with implementing an early warning system to identify high school students with disabilities who are not on track to graduate 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 leadership teams (DLTs) to embed Each Child On Track in the Ohio Improvement Process and support implementation at the building level.

An effective strategy for increasing graduation rates is to implement an early warning system to identify students at risk of dropping out and then provide interventions to support those students. Implementation of an early warning system relies on team-based leadership and processes to collect, manage, and use data for decision-making at both the student and system levels. 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 school and graduate with a regular diploma.

Note. Context data are from Ohio Department of Education websites (retrieved July 2023) (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. Most recent publicly available typology data is from 2013, all other data are from the 2022-23 school year.

Getting Started With Each Child On Track

In this district, the DLT identified several concerns with the accuracy and quality of its early warning data that team members had to address before they could begin using the data to identify students who were at risk for dropping out of school. For example, the DLT found inconsistencies between how data were collected and reported in the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and the district's other student information systems. The team needed to improve its capacity to collect and use data, including aligning existing data systems, establishing consistency in data collection practices, and developing processes for reviewing data during DLT meetings. In addition, the team had to build readiness and buy-in for the work by establishing roles and responsibilities and learning about the early warning indicators.

> "Learning that we had some disconnects . . . between [our student information system] and what was being reported to the state within the EMIS was something we needed to know. We've taken steps to fix that and we're still in the process."
> —District Leader

With assistance from the SST, the team began aligning existing data systems and established consistent definitions and data collection practices for the data elements (i.e., attendance, behavior, and course performance) within the early warning system. In addition, the DLT began using research-based thresholds for identifying students as at risk for dropping out. The use of the early warning thresholds has helped the team to prioritize attendance and behavior as areas of focus moving forward. To

promote buy-in and readiness, the DLT has focused on communication with staff about the use of early warning data and the importance of using a data-driven approach to identify students who are at risk for dropping out. To this end, the district assistant superintendent conducted meetings with district-wide administrators to share the Each Child On Track work in the district.

The Impact

Each Child On Track is a comprehensive and long-term project. Although it will take time to improve long-term outcomes for students, this district is already seeing positive changes to adult practices and mindsets. During the first year of Each Child On Track, this district has improved the DLT's capacity to collect accurate early warning data and has established readiness and buy-in for implementation. Impacts so far are as follows.

> "We are now getting to a place where a lot more of us are aware of what's happening [with our data systems] rather than one person . . . we're not so reliant on one person to have accurate data so that we can make appropriate decisions."
>
> —District Leader

Shared responsibility for data collection and data use

Participation in Each Child On Track has brought renewed attention to the district's data collection and data use practices. Rather than relying on a single individual, the DLT has established a team-based approach with shared responsibilities to ensure consistent and accurate data.

Improved buy-in and readiness

Improving the district's data systems has helped create buy-in and readiness to engage in implementation of the early warning system. District personnel have increased confidence in the accuracy and usefulness of the data within the system now that the team has addressed many inconsistencies in the data. This improved buy-in and readiness has led to more engagement in implementation and to an increased willingness to use early warning indicator data.

Next Steps

Planning for and building sustainability starts early and continues throughout implementation. This district is working toward continued growth and implementation and has identified several next steps to enhance its implementation of Each Child On Track. Going forward, the DLT will build the capacity of the building leadership team (BLT) and teacher-based teams (TBTs) to engage in data-driven conversations using early warning data. In addition, the team will work to build capacity to implement interventions for students at risk of dropping out and monitor the progress of those students.

In the next year, the district plans to:

- Continue to develop its systems and processes for collecting, managing, and analyzing early warning data to ensure that the data are accurate and easy to use

- Work closely with the high school BLT to establish processes to analyze early warning data and communicate data effectively with the DLT

- Connect and align the district's early warning system with the district's efforts to implement a Multitiered System of Supports (MTSS) and ensure that robust interventions and supports are available in Tiers 2 and 3 of MTSS

- Continue to communicate the district's vision for using early warning data to identify students at risk of dropping out and embed early warning data use practices within current systems and structures

Conclusion

This Success Story highlights the work of one district to improve its data collection and data use practices during the first year of Each Child On Track. Although it is too early to see changes in student-level outcomes as a result of this work, important changes to the district-level infrastructure have occurred that are a necessary first step in implementing an early warning system. Even though the district is still establishing this infrastructure, it plans to begin using the system to identify students who are at risk and monitor the effectiveness of interventions during the next school year.