Acknowledgements

This research report was prepared for Education’s Next Horizon by Shannon Lasserre-Cortez, PhD, Kimberly LeSage, PhD, and Trevor Simon of the Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

The project was supported by the Louisiana Association of United Ways, Entergy Louisiana, Capital One Bank, Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation, ExxonMobil, and State Farm Insurance. Printing was provided courtesy of Moran Printing, Inc. and Unisource.

We are grateful to the following additional sponsors who support Louisiana’s Promise, our statewide initiative on dropout prevention: Patrick F. Taylor Foundation, Reily Foundation, Phillip A. Rozeman, M.D., The Boo Grigsby Foundation, and the Louisiana Public Facilities Authority.

Report Release Date: May 2013
This study gauges student perceptions of dropout prevention supports and interventions.
The findings of the study have implications for state and district funding of dropout prevention support programs, and for the design and scope of specific interventions.

Introduction

Beginning with the 2008 Louisiana’s Promise Statewide Conference on Dropout Prevention, Education’s Next Horizon has partnered with the Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and local school districts to engage community leaders in identifying local solutions to the dropout problem. This study, which gauges student perceptions of dropout prevention supports and interventions offered by state, district and school leaders, builds on our continuing efforts to increase graduation rates and better prepare students for college and careers.

In 2011, Education’s Next Horizon partnered with the Picard Center to examine commonalities and best practices among 36 Louisiana high schools that achieved a graduation rate of 80% and increased graduation rates by 10% for five successive years. The report, Promise Fulfilled: Louisiana’s 80/10 High Schools, was distributed to over 800 school leaders across the state.

Several themes arose from the surveys given to the 80/10 school administrators. All schools reflected the common value of increasing their graduation rates through a combination of school, parent, and community-driven initiatives. Additional commonalities included:

1. The creation of rigorous coursework, curriculum, and the addition of higher level coursework.
2. An increased utilization of school data to modify curriculum and instruction as well as using benchmarks and assessments.
3. The inclusion of engaging instruction and application of real-world problems into projects.
4. Closer analysis of student work to increase more effective instruction.
5. Remediation for struggling students as well as grade and credit recovery.
6. Instruction for critical grade-level exams, such as the LEAP, GEE, and end-of-course exams.
7. The increase of adult one-on-one relationships within the school community, through the use of mentors, tutors, and extracurricular activities.
8. Strategies to ease the transitions between eighth and ninth grades such as parent conferences, feeder schools, and summer programs.
9. Increased focus on ninth-grade student success using parent meetings, graduation coaches, remediation of deficits, and increased structure.

After releasing the 80/10 report, Education’s Next Horizon consulted with the LDOE to determine research directions for a follow-up study. In recent years, the LDOE and local school districts have instituted a number of policies and programs to help high school students overcome risks and barriers that prevent many of them from graduating in four years. We thought it best to gauge student perceptions of these programs to determine the level of student awareness and participation, and whether students believe these interventions made a difference in their ninth grade experience. The findings of the study have implications for state and district funding of dropout prevention support programs, and for the design and scope of specific interventions.
Effective dropout prevention requires targeting students at risk for school dropout early and supporting these students through school programming and special services.

**Background**

According to current research, characteristics associated with high school graduation are varied and linked to individual and institutional factors. These factors include socioeconomic status, background, academic performance, and expectations of earning a college degree. Though dropout rates have declined over the last two decades, school dropout is still a large-scale and costly problem. The negative outcomes linked to dropout include limited employment opportunities, higher rates of unemployment, poor health, and lower standards of living.

Effective dropout prevention requires targeting students at risk for school dropout early and supporting these students through school programming and special services. Support efforts should be led by a taskforce of school personnel including administrators, teachers, and counselors. These personnel hold key roles in prevention efforts and are charged with identifying dropout predictors such as absenteeism, misbehavior and delinquency, disengagement, remediation and retention, and attitudes or beliefs that do not support academic persistence.

The dropout taskforce is also responsible for fostering communication among students and parents to discuss progress and address concerns. Likewise, these individuals are responsible for implementing effective support programs in which students’ peers and community members take part in providing mentoring, tutoring, and other support efforts. Effective dropout prevention includes skills-based programs and the development of clear goals and graduation plans for at-risk students. It also is imperative that programming undergo continuous evaluation and improvement based on data and student needs.

**Louisiana Graduation Rates**

Since the 2005-06 school year when graduation rates were first calculated based on a formula recommended by the National Governor’s Association, Louisiana’s cohort graduation rate has been steadily increasing. The cohort graduation rate measures how many students enter ninth grade as a cohort and then graduate from high school four years later.

**Figure 1. Cohort Graduation Rates**

![Graph showing cohort graduation rates from 2005-06 to 2011-12](image)

Source: www.laeducationresults.net
Louisiana Dropout Rates

With the understanding that students may leave school for legitimate reasons besides dropping out, for example transferring out-of-state, the LDOE has released cohort dropout rates beginning with school year 2006-07. These account for students who dropped out of school, not those who left for legitimate reasons.

Figure 2. Cohort Dropout Rates

Source: http://www.laeducationresults.net/State/Dropout.aspx

In keeping with steadily rising graduation rates, the statewide student dropout rate has steadily decreased over the last five years reported.

Dropouts by Grade

The following graphic illustrates the breakdown of when students drop out by grade level.

Figure 3. Annual Aggregated Dropout Rate By Grade, 2010-11 School Year (Preliminary)

Source: www.Louisianaschools.net
Best Practices

In 2008, the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) released a report describing best practices for dropout prevention in schools as part of the What Works Clearinghouse. Table 1 (right) describes the six recommendations.

The IES recommendations were reported with the following caveat:

The panel believes that the greatest success in reducing dropout rates will be achieved where multiple approaches are adopted as part of a comprehensive strategy to increase student engagement. Although some of these strategies may have the capacity to improve graduation rates at the margin when implemented individually, the panel strongly recommends a strategic approach that integrates multiple recommendations and has the potential to make a bigger difference.

Table 1. IES Best Practices for Dropout Prevention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Level of Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diagnostic</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out. States, districts and schools should develop comprehensive, longitudinal, student level databases with unique IDs that, at a minimum, include data on student absences, grade retention, and low academic achievement. Data should be reviewed regularly, with a particular emphasis before the transitions to middle school and high school.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Targeted interventions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out. Adult advocates should have an appropriate background and low caseloads, and be purposefully matched with students. Adequate training and support should be provided for advocates.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance. Help students to improve academic performance and re-engage in school. This should be implemented in conjunction with other recommendations.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Implement programs to improve students’ classroom behavior and social skills. Students should establish attainable academic and behavioral goals and be recognized when they accomplish them. Schools can teach strategies to strengthen problem-solving and decision-making skills, and partner with community-based agencies to provide students with supports to address external factors affecting social and behavioral interactions.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schoolwide interventions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Personalize the learning environment and instructional process. A personalized learning environment creates a sense of belonging and fosters a school climate where students and teachers get to know one another and can provide academic, social, and behavioral encouragement.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school. Engagement can be increased by providing students with the necessary skills to complete high school and by introducing students to postsecondary options.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Risk Factors**

*Individual Background Characteristics*
- Has a learning disability or emotional disturbance

*Early Adult Responsibilities*
- High number of work hours
- Parenthood

*Social Attitudes, Values, & Behavior*
- High-risk peer group
- High-risk Social behavior
- Highly socially active outside of school

*Family Background Characteristics*
- Low socioeconomic status
- High family mobility
- Low education level of parents
- Large number of siblings
- Not living with both natural parents
- Family disruption

*School Performance*
- Low achievement
- Retention/over-age for grade

*School Engagement*
- Poor attendance
- Low educational expectations
- Lack of effort
- Low commitment to school
- No extracurricular participation

*School Behavior*
- Misbehavior
- Early aggression

*Family Engagement/Commitment to Education*
- Low educational expectations
- Sibling has dropped out
- Low contact with school
- Lack of conversations about school

© 2007 National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University and Communities In Schools, Inc.

---

**Dropout Prevention Funding**

Louisiana high schools have traditionally participated in several dropout prevention programs simultaneously. Moving forward, however, funding issues leave many of the programs traditionally used to increase graduation rates in danger of being cut. For example, at the beginning of the study, the research team learned that one of the programs at the heart of the study, Everybody Graduates, had already been cut from the state budget.

**Risk Factors**

In May 2007, the National Dropout Prevention Center released the risk factors for dropping out of high school. As with the dropout prevention tactics, there is no single factor that will perfectly predict whether a student will drop out of school, but combinations of factors should be taken into account when deciding if a student should be targeted for intervention. The risk factors are listed in the sidebar on this page.

**The Study**

**Methods**

Letters were sent to all Louisiana public high school principals inviting them to allow their 10th-grade students to participate in the study (appendix A). Since the Everybody Graduates program was universal during the 2011-12 school year, every high school was included in the target population. The survey instrument (appendix B) was created by researchers from the Picard Center in consultation with the LDOE and was administered electronically through the online survey tool Survey Monkey. The survey was designed to examine the efficacy of dropout prevention practices such as mentoring, credit recovery, and graduation planning. Schools were given approximately four weeks to have all 10th-grade students complete the survey.

The following programs were targeted for the survey:

**Everybody Graduates** – Launched in 2010, this program was designed to incorporate best practices to improve graduation outcomes including the use of data systems to track and monitor student progress and the establishment of freshmen academies. (All schools)

**Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG)** – A dropout prevention and recovery program that delivers a unique set of services for at-risk students, to help them earn a high school diploma and for out-of-school youth, to assist them in earning a high school equivalency diploma upon successful completion of the GED program. (Limited Participation)

**Connections** – Connections provides overage students with targeted instruction and accelerated remediation, with the aim of preparing them to enter a high school setting in the diploma, GED, or state-approved skills pathway after one year. Students may also be eligible to work towards industry-based certification. (Limited Participation)

**Accelerated Student Achievement Pathways (ASAP)** – This program serves overage students (15-16 years of age) who have been retained for one or more years, but are entering the ninth grade for the first time. ASAP aims to improve student outcomes through the use of flexible scheduling, distance learning, and dual enrollment. (Limited Participation)
High Schools that Work (HSTW) - Southern Regional Education Board program that uses research-proven strategies to help states transform their public high schools into places where all students learn at high levels. The program is based on the belief that most students can master complex academic and technical concepts if schools create an environment that encourages students to make the effort to succeed. (Limited Participation)

Participants

A list of participating schools is included below. These schools vary greatly in several factors. Based on data from the 2010-11 school year, the range of graduation rates for participating schools was 55 - 94%. The percentage of non-white minority students ranged from 1 - 100%. The lowest percentage of students who received Free and Reduced Lunch, an indicator of low socioeconomic status, was 24% and the highest percentage was 92%. Total enrollment ranged from 174 students to 1,570 students.

Table 2. List of Schools with Participating Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating School</th>
<th>District (Region)</th>
<th>Count of Responses*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airline High School</td>
<td>Bossier (4)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption High School</td>
<td>Assumption (2)</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basile High School</td>
<td>Evangeline (5)</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle Chasse High School</td>
<td>Plaquemines (3)</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benton High School</td>
<td>Bossier (4)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booker T. Washington New Technology High School</td>
<td>Caddo (4)</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaux Bridge High School</td>
<td>St. Martin (3)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caddo Career &amp; Technology Center</td>
<td>Caddo (4)</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecilia High School</td>
<td>St. Martin (3)</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choudrant High School</td>
<td>Lincoln (5)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquering Word Christian Academy (Scholarship)</td>
<td>Jefferson (3)</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converse High School</td>
<td>Sabine (4)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairview High School</td>
<td>Allen(7)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florien High School</td>
<td>Sabine (4)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin Senior High School</td>
<td>St. Mary (3)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haughton High School</td>
<td>Bossier (4)</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jena High School</td>
<td>LaSalle (5)</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennings High School</td>
<td>Jefferson Davis (7)</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Area New Early College High School</td>
<td>Orleans (1)</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Providence Senior High School</td>
<td>East Carroll (5)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“It is EXTREMELY important for me to graduate from college because I don’t want to “limit” myself.”

Quotes included represent a sample of student comments from 2012 Education’s Next Horizon Student Survey
Many High School                  Sabine (4)    <10
Morgan City High School           St. Mary (3)   144
Natchitoches Central High School  Ouachita (5)   307
Negreet High School               Sabine (4)     98
North DeSoto High School          DeSoto (4)     75
North Webster High School         Webster (4)    72
Parkway High School               Bossier (4)    14
Patterson High School             St. Mary (3)   88
Pelican All Saints High School    DeSoto (4)     <10
Phoenix High School               Plaquemines (3) 10
Plain Dealing High School         Bossier (4)    <10
Plaquemine Senior High School     Iberville (3)   94
South Beauregard High School      Beauregard (7) 131
South Plaquemines High School     Plaquemines (3) 11
St. Helena Central High           St. Helena (8) 19
Terrebonne High School            Terrebonne (3) 12
West Jefferson High School        Jefferson (3) 126
Westlake High School              Calcasieu (7)  83
Winnfield Senior High School      Winn (4)       <10
Zachary High School               E. Baton Rouge (8) <10
Zwolle High School                Sabine (4)     50

*Counts less than ten are not reported to protect student privacy.

Recurring Themes

- Many respondents were not familiar with the identified support opportunities, (Everybody Graduates, Connections, ASAP, HSTW, and JAG).
- Many students reported not utilizing support services offered to them by their schools, such as mentors and advisory classes.
- Many students did not participate in support programs because they were not aware the programs existed.
- Though they may not have participated in the identified support programs, many students were involved in other programs offered at their school such as JROTC and LA GEAR Up.
- Students stated that tutoring was the support mechanism they found to be the most beneficial.
- Although a written graduation plan is required by Louisiana law for every student entering eighth grade, many survey participants were not familiar with the idea of a written graduation plan.
- Multiple respondents identified LA Core as their graduation plan.
- A majority of the respondents believe earning a college degree is important.
- Many respondents intend to go to college, yet they had not created a written graduation plan.
Conclusions

- Most students did not report participating in any of the identified support programs, (Everybody Graduates, Connections, ASAP, HSTW, and JAG). Low participation could be attributed to lack of program awareness by students or absence of need for dropout prevention supports because students are not at risk for dropping out. IES, however, recommends school-wide interventions that reach all students as part of a comprehensive dropout prevention plan.

- Fifty percent of the respondents reported not participating in mentor or advisory experiences offered at their school. It is not clear how many of those students would benefit from mentoring.

- Most of the respondents were happy with the support program options offered to them by their schools.

- Of the mentor options, school counselors, teachers, and administrators were offered most by schools. Likewise, respondents reported that these types of mentors were the most beneficial.

- Multiple respondents indicated that they did not perceive counselors as a source of support. Written comments indicated this was largely due to the counselors not having time to meet with students about graduation concerns.

- Of the mentor options, adult mentors and community volunteers were offered least often by schools. Adult mentors also were identified by respondents as the least beneficial. IES recommends adult advocates have appropriate backgrounds and training and purposeful matching of adult advocates with students.

- Student leadership, career coaching, and tutoring were identified most positively as support activities that contributed to a better school experience.

- Most respondents reported that the presence of a caring adult was important to their academic success. This view supports the IES best-practice recommendations.

- Respondents reported feeling more comfortable talking with their teachers about education and career plans, than talking with their counselors about these matters. High counselor workloads may limit the availability of counselors to form relationships with students. Conversely, if counselors are mostly associated with dealing with behavior and discipline issues, students may feel uncomfortable approaching them.

- Graduating from high school was very important for a majority of the respondents, as was earning a college degree, yet 56% of the respondents reported that they did not have a graduation plan or that they were unsure if they had one. Since a clear plan for graduation and post-secondary training is beneficial to all students in accordance with a personalized learning environment, it is our recommendation that schools both help with graduation planning and encourage students to revisit plans often to check progress or make changes.
Which of the following programs did you participate in the last year? Select all that apply.

2,209 Responses
- According to the LDOE during the 2011-12 school year, Everybody Graduates was implemented in all Louisiana high schools. Other programs listed were not available in all schools.
- A majority of students were unaware of their schools’ participation in dropout prevention programs.
- Only 352 of the respondents reported participating in Everybody Graduates even though the program was implemented in all schools.
- Students surveyed may not have participated due to low dropout risk.

How do you feel about the available class choices at your school (such as electives, dual enrollment, technical classes, Advanced Placement, etc.)?

2,200 Responses
- Of 2,200 respondents, 1,227 students were somewhat satisfied with the class choices available at their school.
- Of 2,200 respondents, 557 students were very satisfied with the classes available at their school.
- According to IES best practices, schools should provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide needed skills.
Which of the following types of mentors used in your school did you find most beneficial last year? Select only one.

2,132 Responses
- School counselors, teachers, or school administrators were the most beneficial mentors.
- Adult mentors were reported as the least beneficial.
- Of 2,132 respondents, 556 students reported that their school offered mentors, but that they did not participate in mentoring services.

Were any of the following types of mentors used in your school last year? Select all that apply.

2,200 Responses
- School counselors, teachers, and administrators were the mentors most frequently offered by schools.
- Community volunteers were the least frequently offered options.
- Of 2,185 respondents, 259 students reported that their school did not offer mentors.
- IES recommends adult advocates who are well-trained and purposely matched with students.

How do you feel about the variety of opportunities that support your learning that are offered by your school (such as tutoring, computers and other technology, etc.)

2,191 Responses
- Most respondents were somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the variety of support opportunities offered by their school.
- Of 2,191 respondents, 376 students were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the variety of support opportunities offered at their school.
- IES recommends adult advocates, academic support and enrichment, and programs focused on behavior and social skills.

Which of the following describes your experience last year at school? Select all that apply.

2,187 Responses
- Of 2,187 respondents, 1,088 students reported not having a mentor or advisory experience while at their school.
- Of 2,187 respondents, 259 students reported that their school did not offer mentors.
- According to IES, mentors or advocates should have applicable backgrounds and reasonable caseloads.
How much have student mentors contributed to a better experience as a student?

2,136 Responses
- Of 2,136 respondents, 843 were either ambivalent about the contributions of student mentors or had not interacted with a student mentor.
- Of 2,136 respondents, 89% were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of student mentors to their experience.
- Student mentors may be used in conjunction with other best practices, but should not be a sole source of support for other students.

How much have adult mentors contributed to a better experience as a student?

2,139 Responses
- Of 2,139 respondents, 941 were either ambivalent about the contributions of adult mentors, or had not interacted with an adult mentor.
- Of 2,139 respondents, 776 were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of adult mentors to their experience.
- Adult mentors (including teachers and counselors) are essential to most IES best practices including academic and behavioral supports and targeted instruction.

How much has tutoring contributed to a better experience as a student?

2,136 Responses
- Of 2,136 respondents, 801 were either ambivalent about the contributions of tutoring or had not participated in tutoring.
- Of 2,136 respondents, 948 were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of tutoring to their experience.
- A personalized learning experience is essential to dropout prevention according to IES best practices. This also fosters positive school climate in which teachers and students support and encourage one another.
How much has credit recovery (taking a class after failing it the first time) contributed to a better experience as a student?

2,115 Responses
- Of 2,115 respondents, 896 were either ambivalent about the contributions of credit recovery or had not participated in credit recovery.
- Of 2,115 respondents, 928 were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of credit recovery to their experience.
- Credit recovery programs allow students to catch up on classes they may have failed or allow dropouts a chance to reengage in school in a supportive environment after missing several semesters.

How much have summer programs contributed to a better experience as a student?

2,112 Responses
- Of 2,112 respondents, 913 were either ambivalent about the contributions of summer programs or classes or did not participate in these programs.
- Of 2,112 respondents, 832 were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of after school programs or classes to their experience.
- After school programs address the three targeted interventions in IES best practices.

How much has career coaching contributed to a better experience as a student?

2,105 Responses
- Of 2,105 respondents, 813 were either ambivalent about the contributions of career coaching or had not participated in career coaching.
- Of 2,105 respondents, 955 were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of career coaching to their experience.
- According to IES, engagement can be increased by providing skills training and introducing students to post-secondary options.

How much have after school programs or classes (not clubs or sports) contributed to a better experience as a student?

2,118 Responses
- Of 2,118 respondents, 913 were either ambivalent about the contributions of school programs or classes or did not participate in these programs.
- Of 2,118 respondents, 832 were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of after school programs or classes to their experience.
- According to IES, engagement can be increased by providing skills training and introducing students to post-secondary options.

According to IES, engagement can be increased by providing skills training and introducing students to post-secondary options.
**Q12H**

**How much has work-based learning (such as internship or apprenticeship) contributed to a better experience as a student?**

2,111 Responses
- Almost half (1,020) of the respondents were either ambivalent about the contributions of work-based learning or had not participated in work-based learning.
- Of 2,111 respondents, 736 were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of work-based training to their experience.
- IES recommends introducing students to post-secondary options and encouraging students to focus on skills needed after high school graduation.

**Q12I**

**How much has enrolling in an advisory class contributed to a better experience as a student?**

2,108 Responses
- Of 2,108 respondents, 1,039 were either ambivalent about the contributions of an advisory class or had not participated in advisory classes.
- Of 2,108 respondents, 721 were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of an advisory class to their experience.
- Advisory classes can address all of the IES targeted and school-wide interventions.

**Q12J**

**How much have student leadership opportunities (student government, office aide, student organization officer, etc.) contributed to a better experience as a student?**

2,114 Responses
- Of 2,114 respondents, 813 were either ambivalent about the contributions of student leadership opportunities or had not participated in student leadership opportunities.
- Of 2,114 respondents, 976 were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions of leadership opportunities to their experience.
- Low student engagement is listed as a dropout risk factor by the National Dropout Prevention Center.

**Q13**

**How important is the presence of a caring adult to your academic success?**

2,172 Responses
- Of 2,172 respondents, 1,127 reported that the presence of a caring adult was very important or pretty important to their academic success.
- Of 2,172 respondents, 134 reported that the presence of a caring adult was not important to their academic success.
- Low parental expectations and involvement are a dropout risk factor; however, these issues can be mitigated by targeted and school-wide interventions such as those listed by IES.
Q14

How do you feel about the teachers at your school?

2,156 Responses
- Of 2,156 respondents, 1,351 felt comfortable talking with their teachers about education and career plans.
- Of 2,156 respondents, 657 felt comfortable talking with their teachers about personal matters.
- Respondents reported feeling more comfortable talking with their teachers about education and career plans than talking with counselors about these matters.

I feel comfortable talking with the teachers at my school about personal matters 31%
I feel comfortable talking with the teachers at my school about my education and career plans 63%
I do not feel comfortable talking with the teachers at my school about my life 23%

Q15

How do you feel about the counselor(s) at your school?

2,137 Responses
- Of 2,137 respondents, 1,183 felt comfortable talking with their counselors about education and career plans.
- Of 2,137 respondents, 716 felt comfortable talking with their counselors about personal matters.
- Students indicate they would like to consult with a counselor but are not given the opportunity to do so due to time constraints on the counselors.

I feel comfortable talking with the counselor(s) at my school about my education and career plans 55%
I feel comfortable talking with the counselor(s) at my school about personal matters 34%
I do not feel comfortable talking with the counselor(s) at my school about my life 26%

Q16

How important is it for you to graduate from high school?

2,162 Responses
- Of 2,162 respondents, 2,020 reported that it is very important that they graduate from high school.
- Low expectations and lack of conversation about school is a family characteristic indicative of high dropout risk.
- These factors can be mitigated by adult advocates and a personalized learning environment within the school.

I feel comfortable talking with the counselor(s) at my school about my education and career plans 55%
I feel comfortable talking with the counselor(s) at my school about personal matters 34%
I do not feel comfortable talking with the counselor(s) at my school about my life 26%

I have never talked to the counselor(s) at my school.
Q17  Do you have a current graduation plan?

- Yes. I have an LA ePortal plan
- Yes. I have a Louisiana Connect online plan
- Yes. I have a paper/hard copy plan
- No. I do not have a graduation plan
- I’m not sure if I have a graduation plan

2,071 Responses
- Of 2,071 respondents, 390 have a paper/hard copy plan.
- Only 521 respondents reported having an LA ePortal plan or Louisiana Connect online plan.
- Of 2,071 respondents, 1,160 either did not have a graduation plan, or were unsure if they had a plan.
- Graduation plans are required of all high school students by Louisiana law.

Q18  How important is it for you to earn a college degree?

- Not important at all
- Somewhat unimportant
- Somewhat important
- Very important

2,175 Responses
- Of 2,175 respondents, 1,768 reported that it is very important to earn a college degree.
- Of 2,175 respondents, 133 reported that earning a college degree was not very important or not important at all.
- Students with low expectations for post-secondary schooling and those whose siblings and parents have dropped out of school are at significant risk for dropping out themselves.

Limitations

This study focused only on 10th graders. Since many students in Louisiana who drop out of school do so before they reach 10th grade, our sample was limited to students who are already slightly more likely to graduate. These students may have been less likely to participate in dropout prevention programs. Conversely, our sample did not include students who had already dropped out of school and was limited in its ability to identify programs and practices that did not prevent students from dropping out.

In addition, a programming problem with the survey may have prevented students at some schools to sign in, possibly decreasing the number of participants who were able to take the survey before the problem was identified and ultimately fixed.

“I want to graduate, just not sure of my exact plan.”

“I don’t know what [a graduation plan] is. But I am smart.”

Quotes included represent a sample of student comments from 2012 Education’s Next Horizon Student Survey
Appendix A: Letter of Request for Participation

Dear Principal:

Education’s Next Horizon, a statewide non-profit organization that works with districts and schools to increase graduation rates, is conducting a 10th-grade student survey on increasing graduation rates. The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) fully endorses this project. They provided input in the design of the survey and have provided information about the survey to the districts through the LDOE newsletter.

The purpose of the survey is to gauge student perceptions and values regarding various interventions and support activities that students might have experienced in the 9th grade. While the survey is open to all 10th grade students, we are particularly interested in hearing from students who participated in Jobs for America’s Graduates, Accelerated Student Achievement Pathways, and Everybody Graduates.

Since taking the survey is strictly optional, we are seeking your cooperation and help in encouraging your 10th grade students to take the survey during the school day. It also would help if you designated a specific day and time(s) when the survey can be taken.

The survey is available online (see link below) until October 19 and should only take 10-15 minutes to complete. Student names will be kept confidential.

Survey results will be compiled by the Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The final report will be made available to school leaders and education policymakers to support your work in helping students to graduate and be prepared for post-secondary and career opportunities. Each participating school will receive ten (10) copies of the final report.

We have set up a statewide conference call on Friday, October 5 at 2p.m. to answer any questions you may have. The call information is 866-691-1906, Code 3833844. We encourage you or a designated staff person to dial in. In the meantime, please don’t hesitate to email me at jsmith@lanexthorizon.org or call me at (225) 383-3844 if you have questions or need additional information.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated. A link to the survey is below.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/enh2012survey

Sincerely,

John Warner Smith, CEO
Education’s Next Horizon
www.ednexthorizon.org
Appendix B: Survey Text

2012 Education’s Next Horizon Student Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your participation is completely optional, so if you decide you do not want to participate, you can change your mind at any time.

Your responses will be kept confidential. Your teachers, principal, and counselors will not have access to your responses.

Your survey answers will help us to decide which programs and activities are most useful to help students graduate with a high school diploma.

1. School you attend this year.
2. District or Parish
3. Your name (will be kept confidential)
4. I am a:
   a. Student
   b. Adult (teacher/counselor, etc.)
5. Which of the following programs did you participate in last year:
   a. Everybody Graduates
   b. Connections
   c. Accelerated Student Achievement Pathway (ASAP)
   d. High Schools That Work (HSTW)
   e. Jobs for Americas Graduates (JAG)
   f. None of the above
   g. Other (Please Specify)
6. How do you feel about the available class choices at your school (such as electives, dual enrollment, technical classes, Advanced Placement, etc.)?
   a. Very Dissatisfied
   b. Somewhat dissatisfied
   c. Somewhat Satisfied
   d. Very Satisfied
   e. N/A
7. How do you feel about the variety of opportunities that support your learning that are offered by your school (such as tutoring, computers and other technology, etc.)?
   a. Very Dissatisfied
   b. Somewhat dissatisfied
   c. Somewhat Satisfied
   d. Very Satisfied
   e. N/A
8. Were any of the following types of mentors used in your school last year? Select all that apply:
   a. Student mentors
   b. School counselors, teachers, or school administrators who also work as official advisors to students
   c. Adult mentors whose only job is to mentor students
   d. Community volunteers (i.e., volunteers from churches, community organizations, businesses, etc.)
   e. My school did not offer mentors
9. Which one of the following types of mentors used in your school did you find most beneficial last year? Select one:
   a. My school offered mentors, but I did not participate
   b. Student mentors
   c. School counselors, teachers, or school administrators who formally mentor students
   d. Adult mentors employed by the district whose only job is to mentor students
   e. Community volunteers (i.e., volunteers from churches, community organizations, businesses, etc.)
10. Which of the following describes your experience last year at school? Select all that apply:
    a. I was assigned a student mentor when I entered the school
    b. I was assigned an adult mentor when I entered the school
    c. I was enrolled in an advisory class during the first year at the new school
    d. I participated in afterschool or summer programs
    e. None of the above
11. Which one of the following support services or programs did you find the most beneficial last year? Select one:
    a. Having a student mentor assigned when you entered school
    b. Having an adult mentor assigned to you when you entered the school
    c. Being enrolled in an advisory class during the first year at the new school
    d. Participating in afterschool or summer programs to prepare you for 9th grade
    e. My school offered this kind of support, but I did participate
    f. My school did not offer this kind of support
12. How much has each one of the following support activities contributed to a better experience for you as a student?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School programs or classes (not clubs or sports)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit recovery (taking a class after failing it the first time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-based learning (such as internship or apprenticeship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolling in an advisory class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student leadership opportunities (student government, office aide, student organization officer, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. How important is the presence of a caring adult to your academic success?

- a. Very important
- b. Pretty important
- c. A little important
- d. Not important
- e. Other (please specify)

14. How do you feel about the teachers at your school? Select all that apply:

- a. I feel comfortable talking with the teachers at my school about personal matters
- b. I feel comfortable talking with the teachers at my school about my education and career plans
- c. I do not feel comfortable talking with the teachers at my school about my life
- d. Other (please specify)

15. How do you feel about the counselor(s) at your school?

- a. I feel comfortable talking with the counselor(s) at my school about personal matters
- b. I feel comfortable talking with the counselor(s) at my school about my education and career plans

16. How important is it for you to graduate from high school?

- a. Not important at all
- b. Somewhat unimportant
- c. Somewhat important
- d. Very important
- e. I don’t know

17. Do you have a current graduation plan?

- a. Yes. I have an LA ePortal plan
- b. Yes. I have a Louisiana Connect online plan
- c. Yes. I have a paper/hard copy plan
- d. No. I do not have a graduation plan
- e. I’m not sure if I have a graduation plan
- f. Other (please specify)

18. How important is it for you to earn a college degree?

- a. Not important at all
- b. Somewhat unimportant
- c. Somewhat important
- d. Very important
References:


3. Rumberger, & Ah Lim, Why students drop out of school.


6. Princiotta, & Reyna, Achieving graduation for all.


8. Belfield, Hollands, & Levin, Providing comprehensive educational opportunity to low-income students.


11. Princiotta, & Reyna, Achieving graduation for all.


14. Princiotta, & Reyna, Achieving graduation for all.

15. Princiotta, & Reyna, Achieving graduation for all.


17. Rumberger, & Ah Lim, Why students drop out of school.


20. Cash, Dawicki, & Sevick, Springfield Public Schools dropout prevention program assessment & review (PAR).


22. Rotermund, Why students drop out of high school.


Student Perceptions of Graduation Support Programs in Louisiana High Schools

We are grateful to the following sponsors who helped to underwrite this research:

[Logos of Capital One Bank, Entergy, United Way, Louisiana Association of United Ways, Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation, State Farm, ExxonMobil, Emprint Printing, and unisource]

Printing courtesy of:

[Logos of Emprint Moran Printing and unisource]

Designed by deGravelles and Associates