

## **Early Intervention Methods Designed to Improve High School Completion Rates: Linking Multiple Pathways to High School Reform**

The Portland Public Schools District (PPS) is making intentional efforts to integrate interventions and options for off-track and out-of-school youth into the high school redesign. Using a full-system approach, PPS is addressing the needs of the population of youth who are least likely to graduate. This is being done by implementing both early intervention for youth who are just beginning to show signs of disengagement and academic distress, and recovery options for those who have fallen significantly off-track.

The District is building on the Connected by 25 initiative by:

- Using data to identify priority students by name, prior to entering high school,
- Using proven interventions through their transition into high school,
- Monitoring their academic progress,
- Providing strong options for those students who need a different approach to their education, and
- Striving to increase student success in post-secondary options.

Portland has a long history of providing a breadth of alternative education options to students. Nearly 3000 students are served by in-District and community-based organization schools (CBOS). Of those, over 2000 students have been disengaged from their education for more than six weeks, and are reengaging because of the opportunities these options provide.

Through collaborative planning with school and program leaders, an ambitious program evaluation plan has been implemented during the past year. This plan focuses on student outcomes – specifically measuring academic growth, school connectedness and preparedness for post-secondary options. Obviously, students attending education options have multiple variables and barriers that influence their learning. Therefore, these variables are layered on the student outcomes, to provide an accurate view of student progress and achievement. Additionally, this evaluation plan will provide schools with the data necessary to inform program improvements and collaboration with other education options.

Most recently, PPS has initiated outreach efforts to disconnected youth through the Transition Center, a program that provides immediate reengagement for students who desire to return to school but face barriers associated with timing or program capacity. At the Center, students are provided academic assessments, credit evaluation, online courses with teacher support, counseling to identify “best-fit” educational options, and follow-up as the student transitions to a school or program. Additionally, the staff makes efforts to contact students who have not returned to their former school nor enrolled elsewhere.

Education Options is a significant element in the current PPS High School Redesign. The District is moving forward with a plan to assure that all students have access to high quality educational opportunities. By providing choice among large community schools, magnet schools, and alternative and charter schools, students will be empowered to engage in the education setting that meets their unique needs and increase their success in high school and beyond.

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