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At-a-Glance

KEY ISSUE

Supporting a smooth transition to high school requires allowing struggling students to catch up while also ensuring they are challenged and engaged in learning.

Primary Findings

Transitions into high school can be eased when both structural and specialized curricula reforms are in place.

TAKE-AWAYS

State Level

- Identify and disseminate readiness indicators for high-school-level work along with benchmarking tools, such as checklists and guidelines, for high schools to use to determine who needs extra support.

- Gather information from high schools regarding how many incoming ninth graders are not yet prepared to take college-prep English and math, and track progress of how many students are ready each year.

- Provide guidelines on how to offer double-doses of catch-up courses—courses that boost struggling ninth-grade students' skills in reading and mathematics—in the first semester of high school

Toward Ensuring a Smooth Transition Into High School

by Corinne Herlihy of MDRC

INTRODUCTION

The transition into high school is a critical juncture for students—a time when they move from often smaller and more supportive middle schools to larger high schools, where the academic and social demands are higher. The cost of failing to make this transition successfully is high for students and for the schools that serve them. Unsuccessful high school transitions contribute to high dropout rates, low on-time graduation rates, and low achievement in American high schools. Therefore, it is vital to identify what works to ensure that all students make it through this important gateway.

This issue brief draws on two studies of high school reform models conducted by MDRC, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization, which shed light on promising strategies to support ninth-grade students. Increasing the capacity of high schools to provide extra help for ninth-grade students to catch up, to learn to read well, and to earn credits in English and algebra is critical, as these academic achievements are key predictors of whether students are likely to graduate on time (Quint, 2006).

THE CHALLENGE

Although moving from middle school to high school can be a very exciting time for students, the transition is filled with great anxiety and stress for many adolescents (Hertzog, Morgan, & Lena, 1997). Substantial research literature has emerged documenting the fact that the transition into high school is marked by increased disengagement and declining motivation, particularly for low-performing youth (National Research Council, 2004). Increased disengagement and declining motivation, in turn, predict subsequent school dropout. The national graduation rate is estimated by some to be 68 percent, with nearly one-third of all public high school students failing to graduate (Swanson, 2004). In the 35 largest central cities in the United States, between 40 and 50 percent of high schools graduate less than half of their ninth-grade class in four years (Balfanz & Legters, 2004).

Common features of American high schools increase the challenge of making a successful transition for many students. High schools are typically larger and more bureaucratic than elementary and middle schools, which lead to depersonalization and a lack of sense of community (Lee & Smith, 2001).

so that Algebra I and Freshman English can be completed in the second semester.

• Gather statistics on the percentage of students completing and making progress in Algebra I and Freshman English by the end of ninth grade.

District Level

Comprehensive interventions designed to ease the transition to high school, whether developed by schools or external service providers, need formal endorsement and institutional support from districts in order to be optimally effective. Structural and curriculum reforms are accompanied by intense instructional focus that involves professional development goals best met with district support.

School Level

Implementing change can be demanding on schools, as it often requires adjustments in organization, new instructional approaches, and additional teacher support. School leadership that is able to embrace and lead positive change with both a sense of urgency and an awareness of the long-term commitment involved will significantly advance high school improvement.

When moving from middle grades to high school there is often a shift from focusing on teaching and nurturing the whole child to focusing—in a more limited way—on instructing students to learn the content of academic subjects. Both teachers and students report that the environment becomes more and more socially comparative and competitive in orientation as students move into high school (Roeser, Strobel, & Quihuis, 2002). Most large public high schools organize instruction around curricular tracks that sort students into different groups, which are often associated more with students' social class and ethnicity than with differences in talents and interests (Lee & Bryk, 1989). In addition, the transition may be more difficult for Latino students, especially if they are English language learners, and for students with disabilities (Askos & Galassi, 2004). Finally, these challenges are compounded by the fact that far too many of those entering the first year of high school are already testing below proficiency in math and reading.

THE CONTEXT

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 has placed a new focus on student achievement in high schools. Graduation rates and measures of student proficiency in reading and math are factored into state-defined standards for "adequate yearly progress," therefore, high schools are seeking ways to ready their students to show acceptable levels of learning by the time they are tested in the 10th grade.

Researchers at the Consortium on Chicago School Research have developed an "on-track" indicator that highlights the importance of the ninth grade: a student is on-track if he or she earns at least five full-year course credits and no more than one semester F in a core course in the first year of high school (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). On-track students are more than 3.5 times more likely to graduate from high school in four years than off-track students. This indicator is a more accurate predictor of graduation than students' middle school achievement test scores or their background characteristics (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

KEY POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

This issue brief draws on key findings that show how transitions into high school can be eased when both structural supports and instructional/curricula reforms go hand-in-hand. By drawing on some of the most rigorous research evaluation available on ninth-grade practices and programs, the brief outlines the gains made when structural supports are successfully implemented for ninth graders and how those gains are strengthened when

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STATE-LEVEL APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS TO HIGH SCHOOL

State Support for Smooth Transitions Into High School: A Checklist

This checklist is adapted from Middle Grades to High School: Mending a Weak Link, by Sondra Cooney and Gene Bottoms, Southern Regional Education Board (2002).

- Identify readiness indicators for high-school-level coursework
- Require districts and schools to report annually the percentage of students completing algebra and Freshman English by the end of freshman year
- Track whether schools are offering more rigorous courses to more ninth-grade students each year
- Communicate to families what ninth graders are expected to know and be able to do to succeed in high school
- Require one-on-one planning sessions for all students and their parents for the purpose of planning a rigorous high school program
- Require high schools to inform middle-grades feeder schools of the percentage of students who completed two years of college-prep English, math and science by the end of 10th grade
- Provide guidelines on how middle and high schools can work together to prepare students for high school
- Require and fund high schools to identify eighth graders who are not ready to take college-prep English and math in grade nine and provide a rich summer school experience
- Provide guidance on how to offer double-doses of catch-up courses—courses that are designed to help students meet the demands of more rigorous high school work, specifically algebra and English, when necessary—in the first semester of high school and enroll them in high school work by the second semester
- Require districts to report on the outcomes of their transition programs

instructional reforms are introduced as well. The studies reveal promising strategies that support not only ninth-grade students but also their long-term educational outcomes. The studies evaluated the Talent Development High School model in five high schools in Philadelphia and the model's predecessor, Project Transition, a research and demonstration program, in two high schools—one in Milwaukee, WI and the other in Kansas City, KS. The brief explains how school improvement programs can improve over time and highlights some of the ways even the strongest interventions need to be strengthened to meet the needs of more high school students.

WHEN STRUCTURAL SUPPORT AND CURRICULA REFORMS ARE PROVIDED TOGETHER

Talent Development's Ninth-Grade Success Academy
The Talent Development High School model is a comprehensive reform initiative designed to help transform the structure and curriculum of large high schools in urban districts, with the aim of improving students' levels of achievement and raising the expectations of teachers and students. The Talent Development High School model was initiated in 1994 through a partnership between the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR), based at The Johns Hopkins University, Patterson High School in Baltimore, MD, and Howard

University in Washington, DC. In 1998, CRESPAR, in collaboration with the Philadelphia Education Fund, began Talent Development's first and most ambitious scaling-up effort in Philadelphia.

MDRC evaluated the implementation of Talent Development in five large, nonselective, comprehensive high schools in Philadelphia where many students faced significant challenges, including poverty. The study followed ninth-grade students through up to five years of high school, ending in the 2003–2004 school year. The researchers examined the impact of Talent Development on attendance, course-taking and promotion outcomes. The ninth-grade students in the schools were predominantly African-American or Hispanic. Nearly half of the students were over age for grade, indicating that they had repeated a prior grade. Attendance rates averaged about 70 percent—in other words, students missed about six days of school each month. On average, they scored in the 20th percentile on nationally normed tests of reading and math in their eighth-grade year.

Early implementation in the five schools focused primarily on the Ninth Grade Success Academy, a small learning community for ninth-grade students and teachers. The Talent Development strategy for addressing ninth-grade issues has five main features: 1) a separate physical setting in which the needs of the incoming freshman class can be met in a distraction-free, concentrated way; 2) a team-teaching structure designed to divide the class into smaller, more intimate groups, identify specific students needing assistance, and provide that assistance effectively; 3) supports and incentives for students to attend school regularly and achieve academically; 4) a curricular regimen, built upon the extended block schedule, which was designed to help students overcome skill and knowledge deficiencies; 5) the Twilight Academy, a specialized program for ninth graders who failed, or experienced difficulty, in the normal school setting; and 6) ongoing coaching and professional development for teachers that is curriculum-specific and focuses on modeling lessons, strategies for learning, and classroom management. The implementation of these features in Philadelphia schools is described below.

- **The separate setting of Ninth Grade Success Academies**
  A separate floor or wing of the school was marked with signs and banners as the Success Academy, with its own entrance wherever possible. (In traditional schools in the district, entering ninth graders would join the entire student body, and their courses might be held anywhere in the building.) The incoming ninth-grade class in Talent Development schools was divided into three or four separate groups, usually of 90 students each. An Academy Principal, with release time, directed the overall effort. The Talent Development implementation team (organizational facilitator and coaches, discussed further below) was usually located in the Success Academy floor or wing, helping to add to an environment that offered more personalized attention to the freshmen.

- **Small learning communities led by teams of teachers**
  Teaching these small groups of Talent Development ninth-grade students was the responsibility of teaching teams. Each team had a Team Leader who coordinated the team's work, handled discipline problems outside the scope of individual classrooms, and received a reduced teaching load. A team of teachers stayed with its student group throughout the academic year. In addition, class schedules were set to ensure that the teams would have common planning times in which they could meet to discuss student issues, resolve disciplinary problems (which might involve meeting with students and their parents), and address curricular or teaching matters. This system allows teachers in a team to share the same students. Whereas students in traditional high schools often feel little support from educational staff during their first year of high school (Seidman, Aber, Allen, & French, 1996), the creation of teacher–student clusters is aimed at enabling teacher teams to become acquainted with one group of students well, thus increasing students' sense of support. For students, teaming combined with shared scheduling aims to create small, stable groups of classmates that act as support networks.

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- **Student supports and incentives**
  The Success Academy also made use of incentives and recognition programs to encourage regular attendance at school. Award ceremonies were directed at students who achieved perfect (90 percent or higher) attendance during a given month, and also for students with high grades. Large attendance charts were posted throughout school hallways to reinforce the message that attending school was important; names of students with perfect attendance and outstanding grade performance were also displayed throughout the Academy space.

  Another key component of the Success Academy was the regular use of "report card conferences." Small teams (sometimes supplemented by staff from CRESPAR or the local intermediary) would meet with each student when report cards were issued, review the student's grades, help the student assess progress toward promotion, and provide encouragement and support. This also became an opportunity for students to meet with individual teachers when they were experiencing problems with one of their courses.

- **Specialized "catch-up" curriculum and extended block schedule**
  CRESPAR's curriculum was designed to provide students with additional assistance to meet the academic requirements of subjects—math and English, in particular—that they would be taking in high school.

  The first semester of ninth grade was pivotal in the Success Academy. During the first semester, ninth-grade students took two preparatory "catch-up courses"—Transition to Advanced Mathematics and Strategic Reading—designed to enhance the skills of incoming freshmen and enable them to succeed in traditional ninth-grade algebra and English. To prepare students more broadly for the demands of high school, students also took a third Talent Development course, Freshman Seminar, which combines study skills, personal goal-setting, and social and group skills. This meant that ninth graders were routinely scheduled to take algebra in Talent Development schools, whereas in traditional schools, students with inadequate backgrounds might take a year of a lower-level course during ninth grade and then take algebra later. Taking algebra in the first year of high school rather than later is considered a strong predictor that a student is on track to graduate (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).

  The success of this course arrangement in the Success Academy rested on extended block scheduling. Students were scheduled to take four courses per semester, each meeting for 90 minutes per day. Each one-semester course was worth a full credit toward graduation. With block scheduling, students could receive a double-dose of English and math in the ninth grade (the "catch-up" courses followed by traditional ninth-grade classes). This arrangement offered potential advantages to students in Talent Development schools: over a four-year period, they could potentially complete 32 credits, compared to 24 for students who attended schools with traditional rosters. Block scheduling also permitted some flexibility in rostering students who failed courses and needed to repeat them.

- **Coaching and professional development**
  Extended block scheduling, to work most effectively, requires teachers to divide 90-minute lessons into engaging and well-structured subunits and activities. Teachers received ongoing, curriculum-specific professional development, focusing on modeling upcoming lessons, improving content knowledge, learning instructional strategies, and trying classroom management. For each course, there were two to three days of training in the summer and one two- to three-hour training session each month during the school year. In addition, coaches specializing in math and reading were available to work with teachers on a weekly basis. Ongoing technical assistance was also provided by CRESPAR-affiliated organizational facilitators, who coordinated components of Talent Development at the sites, including teacher coaching, curriculum materials and other resources, workshops, and student–teacher meetings.

- **The Twilight Academy**
  The Twilight Academy was designed as a special program for current and "repeater" ninth graders who either needed special academic support or needed to be placed outside the normal school environment (for disciplinary or other reasons). This program usually operated in a separate section of the school and outside normal school hours—often later in the day so that some students could work or attend to family matters. The Twilight Academy was an important complement to the Success Academy. It provided flexible and tailored help to academically struggling students. They could, after they had completed missed work or failed courses, rejoin the main school. Just as important, though, was its value in providing a setting where potentially disruptive students could be placed, in lieu of potentially suspending/expelling them or transferring them to one of the district's disciplinary schools.

KEY FINDINGS FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT[1]

- *Talent Development produced substantial gains in attendance, academic course credits earned, and promotion rates during students' first year of high school.* For a typical entering ninth-grade class of 500 students, Talent Development added about nine days of school attendance for each student, helped an extra 125 students pass algebra, and helped an extra 40 students get promoted to the 10th grade on time.

- *The substantial improvements in credits earned and promotion rates were sustained as first-time ninth graders moved through high school.*

- *Talent Development produced marginal improvements in student performance on the eleventh-grade standardized state test in math but produced no systematic change in reading scores for the first cohort of students to experience the model.*

- *The likelihood of repeating the ninth grade declined in Talent Development high schools (due to the model's impact on promotion rates). Those students who needed to repeat the ninth grade registered improved attendance but were still more likely to leave school.*

- *Based on evidence from only the first two schools to implement the model, Talent Development appears to have produced positive impacts on high school graduation rates and on the standardized state test for later cohorts of students.* In the first two high schools to implement Talent Development, the model increased the likelihood that first-time ninth graders would graduate on time by about 8 percentage points. In other words, for a typical class of 500 students entering ninth grade, Talent Development was able to produce an average of about 40 new graduates per year. Please see CRESPAR's Web site (http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/) for further information.

WHEN PRIMARILY STRUCTURAL SUPPORTS ARE OFFERED

Project Transition could be considered a forerunner to Talent Development's Ninth Grade Success Academy as a research and demonstration project that represented an early attempt to intervene in the ninth grade. It focused primarily on structural reforms, and its structural components resembled those of Talent Development: small learning communities, student–teacher teams, and common planning time for teachers. Project Transition also included coaching around instruction, but it did not include the specialized curricula, prescribed instructional methods, and after-hours academy that were intrinsic parts of the Talent Development model. Rather, Project Transition teachers, with input from the coach, identified and pursued instructional practices of their own choosing. However, it can be instructive to review the ways in which structural reforms can create the necessary conditions for improvement and to review how interventions can become stronger over time.

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Project Transition

The Project Transition program developed and evaluated by MDRC was designed to test the effectiveness of a set of reforms intended to improve students' attendance and performance in the first year of high school. Project Transition was implemented and evaluated in Pulaski High School in Milwaukee, during the 1995–96 and 1996–97 school years, and in Schlagle High School in Kansas City, KS, during the 1996–97 school year. Both Pulaski and Schlagle were large comprehensive high schools in urban school districts. The schools served high percentages of students of color and of students receiving free or subsidized lunch. Both sites had high percentages of students with low grade point averages (GPAs), high rates of students dropping out, and declining rates of student attendance and GPAs from eighth to ninth grade.

Project Transition implemented three main strategies to change the environment for ninth-grade students and teachers:

- **Student–teacher teams** of four core subject teachers and a group of students who shared many of the same core classes
- **Daily teacher team meetings** for collaboration on professional development and on solutions to student problems
- **Coach position and other supports** to aid teachers' professional development and efforts to improve instructional practice

Program developers expected these strategies to alter students' and teachers' attitudes and behavior in ways that would help students make a successful transition from middle school to high school and ultimately improve their attendance and performance.

In addition, each Project Transition high school had a learning resource partner, a local institution or agency that would support the Project Transition coach and provide ongoing technical assistance and professional development for the teachers. Other supports included mandatory summer institutes, consisting of several days of professional development and planning, and supplementary funds for use by the teacher teams for professional development.

KEY FINDINGS FOR PROJECT TRANSITION[2]

- *Project Transition created a more supportive environment at both Pulaski and Schlagle for students and teachers alike.* At Pulaski, students reported feeling supported and respected by classmates. At Schlagle, more Project Transition students than their pre-Project Transition counterparts reported feeling cared for by teachers who held high expectations of them.
- *Project Transition achieved positive effects on selected student academic outcomes at Schlagle, where it was more fully implemented.* At Schlagle, more students passed their courses—and thus increased their average number of credits earned—than did their pre-Project Transition counterparts.
- *At Schlagle, Project Transition students also reported being more engaged and experiencing a greater sense of autonomy relative to earlier cohorts of ninth graders.* Project Transition did not have notable impacts on attendance or GPAs at either school.[3]

THE BOTTOM LINE

When high schools successfully implement structural reforms to support incoming freshman, they provide some of the necessary conditions for success in the ninth grade; when they couple these reforms with specific instructional

and curricular reforms, students can only strengthen their academic achievement and long-term success in high school. Project Transition's structural interventions by themselves had only modest effects on student outcomes, but the model's core elements may serve as a foundation for other interventions. Large urban schools can be impersonal environments, so it is notable that Project Transition reduced the sense of isolation among both students and teachers in the two schools studied. The elements of Project Transition may serve as an important complement to other interventions that focus more on instruction.

A key lesson learned from these studies is that structural changes intended to increase personalization and strategies to improve and better tailor curriculum and instruction work together to improve student outcomes. Both interventions used structural changes to create more personalized learning environments and to increase student engagement. Both created small learning communities for ninth graders, teamed students and teachers, and built in time for teachers to work together. Both also provided ongoing coaching for teachers. Coupled with these structural changes, Talent Development's Success Academy additionally provided a more intense instructional focus built around its specialized curriculum and extended block schedule. The content of its "catch-up" courses was designed to help students meet the demands of more rigorous high school work, specifically algebra and English. The curriculum also focused professional development on improving daily instruction in concrete and specific terms. The block schedule facilitated scheduling double-doses of math and English, helping students who entered high school behind or who failed in the first semester get back on track for graduation. And, in combining both structural and instructional changes, Talent Development had stronger effects.

The schools in these studies still have a long way to go to reach the goal of preparing all students for graduation, postsecondary education, and employment. For example, even in the most successful Talent Development schools, a typical ninth grader will still miss about 40 days of school, nearly one-third will not be promoted to the 10th grade, and more than half will not be ready to graduate within four years. Thus, even relatively successful interventions such as Talent Development need much more power.

Also, these initial positive results required significant funding, as well as very demanding changes to school organization, instruction, and teacher support. Both interventions included an intensive one-year planning period. Early buy-in from school leaders and teachers was a key element of both programs. Project Transition also had the support of the schools districts that helped to plan the intervention. Although the district lent financial support for Talent Development, the intervention did not receive formal endorsement and deeper institutional support. The effectiveness of Talent Development and other comprehensive school reforms is likely to be enhanced and more readily sustained with official recognition and institutional support from school districts—providing greater authority to institute changes in the schools, to focus staffing and leadership decisions on specific school improvement strategies, and to marshal funding and resources.

END NOTES

[1] The study focused on estimating the impact of Talent Development for three cohorts of first-time ninth graders from each of the five Talent Development high schools, following these students for up to four years of high school. Impacts were estimated using a comparative interrupted time series design, which compared changes in student performance in Talent Development schools before and after implementation to changes in student performance during the same time period in a set of matched comparison schools. MDRC was able to obtain data on consistently measured student outcomes for three pre-intervention baseline years and up to five post-intervention follow-up years for five Talent Development schools and six comparison schools within the same school district.

The research design, through the use of individual student data, was able to statistically adjust impact estimates for changes in student cohorts' background characteristics over time. In addition, the comparative interrupted time series design used in the Talent Development evaluation uses comparison schools to capture districtwide events or programs that may affect student outcomes. Although no quasi-experimental methodology irrefutably establishes causality, the Talent Development study is particularly rigorous and provides a strong basis on which to attribute changes in student performance to Talent Development.

[2] In order to estimate Project Transition's effects on students, data were obtained from two sources. First, a survey was administered to each group of students during the spring semester of their ninth-grade year. Second, school records data were provided by the school districts involved. Project Transition's effects on students were estimated using a *cohort comparison design,* in which each year's entering ninth-grade class is referred to as a *cohort.* The differences in student experiences and performance between the pre-Project Transition and Project Transition cohorts represent the *impacts,* or effects, of Project Transition.

[3] The cohort comparison design used in the Project Transition evaluation, lacking comparison schools and multiple pre-implementation cohorts for comparison, did not establish as strong a counterfactual as in the Talent Development evaluation. Therefore, the Project Transition findings should be interpreted with greater caution.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DETERMINING A SCHOOLS' PROMOTING POWER STARTS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT NINTH GRADE

The researchers Robert Balfanz and Nettie Legters found that low graduation rates are driven by students who enter high school poorly prepared for success and who have trouble transitioning from ninth grade.

Such students disengage from school, attend infrequently, fail too many courses to be promoted to the 10th grade, and ultimately drop out of school. Balfanz and Legters found that up to 40 percent of ninth-grade students in cities with the highest dropout rates repeat the ninth grade but that only 10 percent to 15 percent of those repeaters go on to graduate.

For states and districts seeking to identify those schools with the weakest or strongest promotion power, the following formula can be applied:

Using data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, Web site: http://nces.ed.gov/), Balfanz and Legters of the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University measured the "promoting power" of high schools with enrollments of more than 300 by comparing the number of freshmen with the number of 12th graders four years later.

A school has "weak promoting power" if the freshman class shrinks by 40 percent or more by the time students reach their senior year. These schools are overwhelmingly attended by minority students.

The Promoting Power Index uses the following formula: The number of students in 12th grade compared to the number of students enrolling in ninth grade for the first time. For example:

$$\frac{65 \text{ graduates in 2006}}{100 \text{ ninth graders in 2002}} = 65\%$$

An Assessment Tool for Schools and Ninth-Grade Students: Determining Early Which Students Need the Most Support

The following student assessment instrument is used to help identify the students most at risk of dropping out in order to assist personnel in leveraging resources for maximum benefit. The tool, developed by researchers Raymond Morley and James Veale and used by New Hampshire's Achievement in Dropout Prevention and Excellence (APEX II) program in partnership with the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability, helps match appropriate supports with individual student needs, particularly those students most at risk, in order to help ensure a smooth transition into and through the gatekeeper year of ninth grade and beyond.

After signing confidentiality agreements, transition teams participating in New Hampshire's APEX II program work with middle schools to gather relevant information. The transition teams include individual guidance counselors and, in some cases, special education teachers who complete the information process with input from student files. If the middle-grades school uses additional methods for tracking academic and behavioral problems, those sources are reviewed as well.

APEX II

STUDENT RISK ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

Student ID: _____   Date: _____

Characterization:

- *Low risk if* no factors are present
- *Medium risk if* one to three noncritical factors are present
- *High risk if* (a) one or more of the critical factors are indicated or (b) four or more of the noncritical factors are indicated.*

Critical Factors	Check (✓) if present
1. Dropout or expelled	
2. Victim of physical, psychological, sexual abuse, rape or other violent crime; student has experienced trauma	
3. Pregnancy/teen parent	
4. Homeless (on the street, shelter, transitional housing, living with friends or other temporary arrangements)	
5. Language/cultural barriers. Recent immigrant	
6. Poor attendance, repeated suspensions, repeated tardiness (more than three unexcused absences in past four months, late to school more than three times)	
7. Repeated behavioral infractions (sent to office more than three times per month)	
8. Out-of-home placement (foster care, detention, independent living, residential treatment, etc.)	
9. Committed criminal acts	
10. Engages in self-injurious behavior (cutting, taking part in very dangerous or risky behavior)	
11. Gang membership	

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AN ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR SCHOOLS AND NINTH GRADE STUDENTS: DETERMINING EARLY WHICH STUDENTS NEED THE MOST SUPPORT (CONTINUED)

Other Factors	Check (✓) if present
1. Has/is experiencing repeated school failure (low achievement, low grades)	
2. Special education student or student with mental, learning, emotional or physical disabilities whose needs are not met through SPED services	
3. Mental health challenges (including depression, violent behavior, suicidal ideation, sudden mood or personality changes)	
4. No extracurricular school activities	
5. Recent crisis (death, divorce, illness) or life transition	
6. Social isolation/relationship problems/negative peer influence	
7. Eating disorders	
8. Chronic health condition	
9. Substance abuse by self or family member	
10. Economically disadvantaged	
11. Committed delinquent acts	
12. Lack of motivation to improve	
13. Family dysfunction/youth's needs are not being met by the family	
14. Lack of interests	
15. Lack of work ethic	
16. Extreme mobility (moving two or more times in one year)	
17. Teacher/staff referral (reason)	

*Adapted from Morley, R. E., & Veale, J. R. (2002). *Student risk assessment for identifying needs and evaluating impacts. Monograph.* Retrieved November 2005.

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