



DROPOUT PREVENTION

STRATEGIES TO ASSIST SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT AND ATTENDANCE



INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND SECONDARY YOUTH



REASON FOR THE STUDY OF STRONG STRATEGIES

The members of iSOSY are concerned that high dropout rates among migratory students are related to low school engagement and attendance. Therefore, the ideas and strategies contained within were developed in order to address these issues with migratory secondary students. While the following strategies could be useful for all students, migratory students often have added barriers to school engagement. The strategies and their applications are designed to help staff work with migratory students who experience low levels of school engagement.

HOW THE SUBJECT AFFECTS THE MIGRANT COMMUNITY

Migrant Education Programs (MEPs) are comprised of dedicated staff who work together to provide educational opportunities for eligible students and improve their overall well-being. The teams may include intervention specialists, teachers, instructional aides, recruiters, parent liaisons, program administrators, and others who work collaboratively to support students and encourage their school engagement and attendance. All of these MEP service providers who work with at-risk high school students and/or out-of-school youth (OSY) have a part to play in encouraging youth to re-engage in educational activities/return to school.



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STRATEGY

1. Make time to listen to a student's fears or concerns and try to understand them.

2. Set appropriate boundaries for behavior that are consistently enforced.

APPLICATION

- In discussions with the student, talk about the student's fears and concerns but also about the student's hopes and dreams. A caring, understanding person in a supportive environment who listens to a student's problems can make a positive difference in providing individualized and timely attention and guidance. Always try to end sessions on a positive note.

- Clearly stated expectations for behavior are important guideposts for students. Collaborate with the student to develop and articulate the rules that have to be followed. Students benefit from being a part of the process and are more likely to follow rules that they helped create.

STRATEGY

3. Encourage the student to participate in one or more school activities. Extend an invitation to parents so that they can become more involved, if possible, in school activities by attending school functions such as sporting events, concerts, science fairs, and theater performances to show support for the school.



APPLICATION

- Meet with the student and discuss the benefits of getting involved in school activities and functions (e.g., team building, clubs, friendships, building school spirit).
- If the student cannot participate in school activities or functions (due to a job or family obligation), encourage involvement in local community activities such as soccer or other sports leagues that are usually more flexible. Assist with the registration process (applications, physicals, permissions, uniforms, fee waivers, etc.)
- Explain to parents the importance and benefits of involvement in school activities at parent meetings. Recruiters and liaisons can follow up in their interactions with parents and encourage their support.
- Invite parents whose children have been successful and are now in college or vocational school to speak at parent meetings. They can talk about their own family's experience and encourage other parents to get involved in their child's education and take advantage of school and local community opportunities.
- Encourage parents to attend school functions or sports events with their child whenever possible.
- Introduce opportunities for migratory students to build friendships among each other and encourage students to attend activities with their friends.

STRATEGY

4. Emphasize the importance of study skills, hard work, and follow-through at home and at school.



5. Meet as a team with the student and a school counselor to share expectations for the student's future and try to figure out how the counselor can support their learning and future plans.

APPLICATION

- During parent meetings, discuss with parents the importance of their support for their children and provide suggestions on how they can encourage them. Stress what a positive difference they can make in the success of their student, not only when children are young, but when they are in middle and high school as well. For instance, parents can help students establish a quiet place at home for study, recognizing that homework and outside projects become more important as students get older.
 - Recruiters and parent liaisons can play a unique role with parents, as they often have more personal relationships with families. They can follow up on parent meeting discussions and reinforce the importance of parental support in a student's school success.
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- MEP personnel, the counselor, the student and parent, if available, should meet at least once per year to ensure that the student is on track for graduation and is fulfilling all academic requirements.
 - Create a learning plan with the student that establishes goals and timelines to help them to stay on track. Be sure to include a plan for tutoring to address any gaps or new interests identified in the annual meeting with the counselor. Monitor progress on the learning plan and provide rewards/acknowledgments as goals are met.

STRATEGY

5. continued...

6. Encourage the student to volunteer in the community or to participate in community groups.



APPLICATION

- Inform parents of the learning plan so they also can provide encouragement and moral support.
- Anticipate disruptions to the plan that may be caused by mobility. Include ideas in the plan for continuing to work on goals over the summer and when the family is away for agricultural work.
- Coordinate with MEPs in receiving areas or provide support virtually on the learning plan over the summer.

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- Discuss the importance and benefits of volunteering. Encourage the student to volunteer in the community, church, local organization, or a school club that emphasizes community service.
 - It is important that MEP staff do some work in advance to identify groups that are welcoming and/or have had previous success with students with a similar background.
 - Have students participate in groups where a positive experience is more likely.

STRATEGY

7. Help the student to think about career options by arranging visits to local companies and colleges, providing information about careers and vocational or college courses, and encouraging the student to participate in an internship or a career-oriented part-time job.



APPLICATION

- Discuss post-secondary goals with the student and assist in exploring career options. Reference the *A-Z Index of the Occupational Outlook Handbook* [<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/a-z-index.htm>] which provides an alphabetized listing of different occupations, including the following:
 - a summary of the position
 - duties
 - work environment
 - how to become one (including education and licensing)
 - pay
 - job outlook
 - state and area data
 - similar occupations
 - Assist students in researching colleges, universities, or technical schools and encourage them to participate in college fairs at school.
 - Arrange college or technical school visitations and assist students in attending in-person and virtual tours.
 - Discuss the process of applying for college or technical school with the student. Assist with college and scholarship applications, including the FAFSA, and with preparing the college essay.
 - Encourage the student to apply for summer internships in a field of interest to get first-hand experience.
 - Assist the student with the application process and preparation for the internship.
 - Bring in speakers and former migrant workers who are in college or in a career to talk about their experiences.
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RESOURCES

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