

# What does “Recovery” Entail? Stories from One Dropout Recovery School Context to Improve School Climate

## Presenters:

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## Context

- An estimated 7,000 youth drop out of school each day;<sup>1</sup>
- Only 66-70% of public high school youth receive their diploma “on time;”<sup>2</sup>
- Researchers, policymakers, and school professionals are challenged with the task of encouraging adolescents who have left school without a diploma, or who are not on track for graduation, to stay engaged in formal education and graduate from high school.<sup>3</sup>

One approach to re-engage youth is to tailor funds, resources, and services to meet the specific needs of these youth. This includes creating a more supportive, personalized learning environment for youth at risk of school dropout that also serves to address their complex needs.

# Dropout Recovery High School Settings



- Locations for dropout recovery programs can include<sup>4</sup>:
  - Traditional public schools
  - Specially-created recovery-focused schools
  - Alternative learning centers
  - Community-based non-profit schools and programs
  - For-profit schools
  - Community colleges
  - Social service agencies
- Some dropout recovery programs also offer opportunities to take college courses for postsecondary credit (i.e., “early college high schools”).
- Early college high schools encourage students to remain for a fifth year to graduate with both a high school diploma and attain credits toward a college degree.<sup>5</sup>



## Needs of Youth and Challenges...

- Youth (aged 16-22), who have dropped out of school, often experience complex family, school, and community risk factors which contributed to their dropout decision.<sup>6</sup>
- Many youth feel disengaged from learning, have weak ties with teachers, and experience extremely high levels of individual and family stress.
- Youth in dropout recovery programs need more supports than youth in traditional public or private school settings.
- Additional supports may include, but are not limited to those for<sup>4,5,7</sup>:

Parenting/Teen pregnancy	Childcare	Transportation
Mental health	Substance Abuse	Employment
English as second language	Immigration	Family violence
Life skills	Special education	Incarceration
Healthcare	Housing	Legal Services



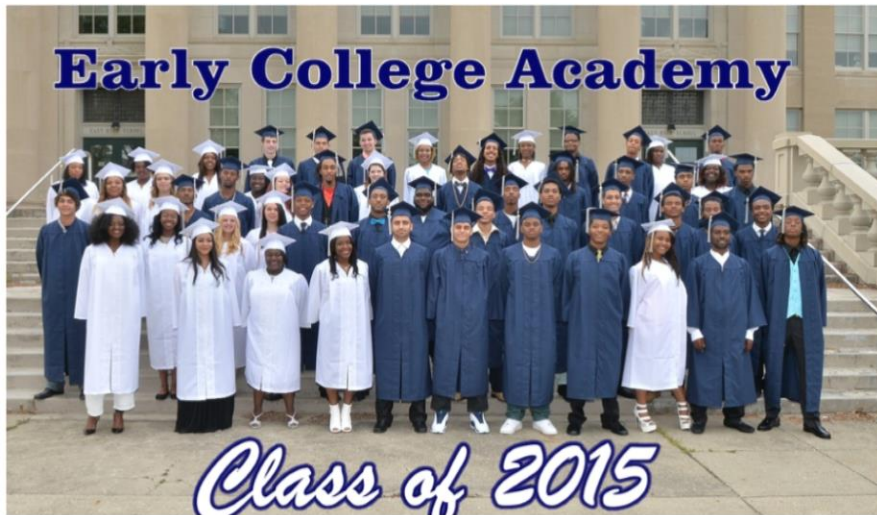
## Protective Practices in Dropout Recovery Settings<sup>8</sup>

- High academic standards designed to link youth to future learning and work opportunities
  - High expectations and clear rules of behavior
  - Opportunities for youth to have a voice in the school
  - A shared sense of community and mutual trust
  - Culturally competent staff in multiple roles
  - Linkages to additional supports in the school and community
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- However, dropout recovery has not been extensively studied, and very little empirical information exists on successful strategies to re-engage students.
  - Schools need tangible case studies and practice examples of what and how to influence positive change and support their students.

# TCU

# ECA

Early College Academy



## Early College Academy

- ECA is an open enrollment charter school for students ages 16-22 residing in Franklin and its contiguous counties.
- In 2016 ECA adopted several nonacademic student support services to promote infrastructure development, assessment, progress-monitoring, and program design.
- Attendance at ECA ranged from 25%- 35% prior to the implementation and systematic targeting of student nonacademic needs.



## **Promote Diversity and Connectedness**

- Increase awareness and support for clubs, activities, and organizations that look to engage all youth

## **Meet Student Nonacademic Needs**

- Improve linkage and coordination of school and community services

## **Support Academic Learning**

- Improve attendance and support persistence



## Promote Diversity and Connectedness

- Increase awareness and support for clubs, activities, and organizations that look to engage all youth

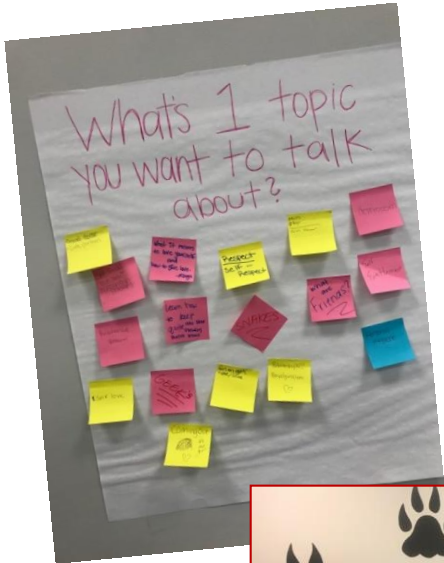
### Interventions implemented:

- Continued **basketball team** and partnered with local business to donate warm-up jerseys led by male school administrators and teachers.
- Continued **Student of the Month** acknowledgements and rewards; led by teacher input, encouragement, and praise.
- Started **Teacher Appreciation** program where students and staff acknowledge what they appreciate about each teacher.
- Partnered with **Scarlet and Gray Financial** to provide financial literacy to students
- Implemented **Girls Group** to address needs of young women at ECA



## Girls Group

Purpose: To create a safe space for young women at ECA to explore strengths and create unity.



- Average 15 girls per session
- Topics Covered:
  - Unity
  - Character strengths
  - Self love and self esteem
  - Healthy relationships



## Promote Diversity and Connectedness

- Increase awareness and support for clubs, activities, and organizations that look to engage all youth

### Interventions implemented:

- Students in submitted art, essays, poems for **school literacy magazine**.
- Continued **chess club** and chess competition.
- **Engagement through exposure:** Supporting students in their job interviews; Trips to local Community College – taking them to get ID's and tour school; Class trips to local radio station; and, Student asked to host their own podcasts in Journalism course.



## Meet Student Nonacademic Needs

- Improve linkage and coordination of school and community services

### Interventions implemented:

- Engaged two year-long social work interns via partnership with The Ohio State University
- Partnered with local community supports for youth and families
- Intake assessments to identify and link students to resources to support their nonacademic needs and teacher referral forms to SW interns



2016-2017

2017-2018



## Support Academic Learning

### – Improve attendance and support persistence

- According to a recent systematic review, school attendance can be improved if:
  1. Students are aware of the problem<sup>9,10,11</sup>
  2. The school has a culture that supports students<sup>9,10</sup>
  3. Students with the most concern are targeted<sup>9,10</sup>
- Interventions implemented:
  - Overall school attendance goal, tracking, and incentives
  - Implement House Bill 410 intervention strategies
  - Partnership with Columbus State Community College (CSCC) to support persistence and matriculation (P-16 approach)
  - Weekly intervention meetings with school staff where students are cased and tiered then provided a “champion” to address their needs



## Promote Diversity and Connectedness

- Increase awareness and support for clubs, activities, and organizations that look to engage all youth

### Intervention outputs:

- Basketball Team: 12
- Girls Group: 17
- Student of the Month: 8
- Chess club: 20

#### **\*Think School-wide:**

- 45-60 students
- Over half of school staff engaged in activities/programs





## Meet Student Nonacademic Needs

- Influence of School Social Work Interns:
  - 161 phone calls to youth and/or parents/guardians about attendance
  - Total of 126 individual counseling sessions with 26 students
  - 6 referrals made to outside agencies
- Family-School-Community Partnerships:
  - Center for Healthy Families;
  - Central Ohio Vocational Alternatives (COVA);
  - Immigrant & Refugee Services (CRIS);
  - Unity Fridge
  - Huckleberry House; etc.
- In-take Assessments and Identification of Needs:
  - 50 surveys collected; identified nonacademic needs:
    - One example: 64% (increase from 45% last year) of students relied on bus transportation.



## ECA Assessment Data

- Risk factors included:
- Violence in homes or neighborhoods (18%)
- Difficulty getting to school on time and staying all day (18%)
- Experience academic difficulty in school (52%)
- Looking for housing or homeless (38%)
- Significant behavioral/mental health issue (14%)
- Hard time getting out of bed in the morning (24%)
- Difficulties with parents or guardians (6%)
- Has child/children (8%)



## ECA Assessment Data

Assets included:

- 89% feel pretty good about who they are
- 72% have supportive and caring friends
- 73% makes friends easily
- 81% have supportive and caring parents, grandparents or other extended family
- 37% participate in sports, clubs or other organized activities with others in the community
- 50% have a job
- 69% feel there is a connection between their education and future goals







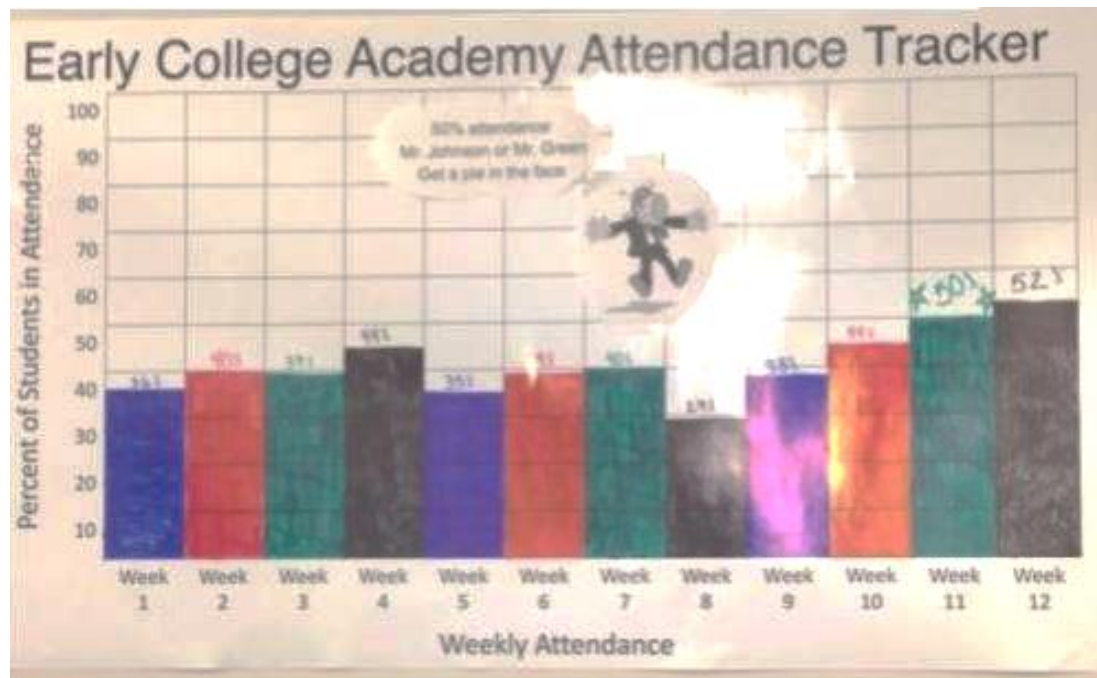
## What I love about ECA:

- “I love the chill, drama free environment. I like that the work is at your own pace, everyone is family” –Nisa
- “I love the family environment.” – Tina
- “I love that ECA is drama free and the staff is caring and loving.” - Ashanti
- “I love the teachers at ECA because they actually teach” – Chereyl
- “I love that teacher’s work one on one, ECA is cool.” – Isiah
- “I love all the teacher and know they care about me.” – Amari



## Support Academic Learning (Attendance)

- Poster displaying weekly attendance averages (School)
- Ticket reward system for positive behaviors (Group & Individual)
- Phone calls to students with excessive absences (Individual)





# House Bill 410

- **Tasks:**

- 1. Weekly attendance meetings**
- 2. Make 3 meaningful attempts to reach reliable contact and schedule meeting regarding student's attendance**
- 3. Participate in student attendance intervention meeting with parent and create intervention plan**

- 91 students who under 18
- 64 students considered habitually truant in 2017-2018 school year
- ~150 phone calls regarding attendance
- 44 attendance meetings
- 14 students who have not been filed truant because they successfully completed their intervention plan

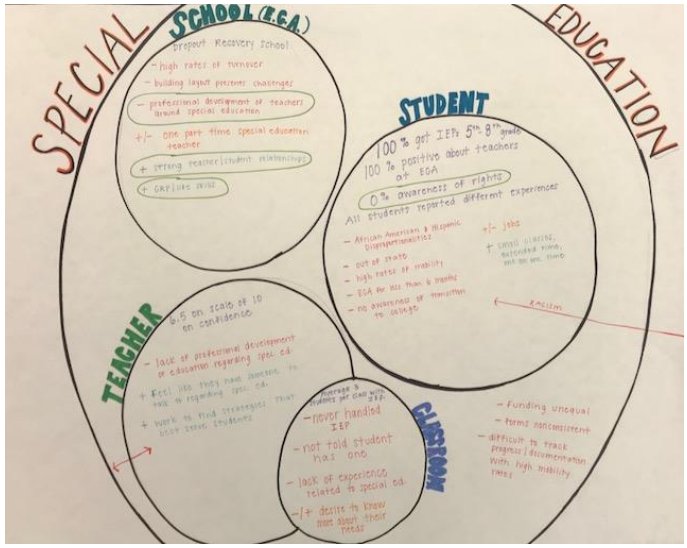
# Evaluation Project: Special Education

Purpose: Needs assessment of current special education program at ECA

- Assess awareness of staff regarding special education services.
- Assess awareness of students regarding their special education needs.

## Results:

- ECA's greatest asset is relationships with students.
- Teachers express desire to know more about how to best serve their students with an IEP.
- Students awareness varies, but all students interviewed were unaware of their specific rights regarding their special education services.





## Evaluation Project: Food Insecurity

Purpose: Determine the level of food insecurity among ECA students

Intervention: Community Partnership with Unity Fridge – providing fresh fruits, vegetables, and Bruegger’s Bagels



### Measurement Tools:

- Needs Assessment
- Focus Group

### Results – Needs Assessment:

- 33.9% buy groceries once every other week
- 46.4% are often able to purchase everything they need
- 44.6% never go to bed hungry
- 12.5% often times find it difficult to focus in class due to being hungry

### Results – Focus Group:

- Students wanted to start an ECA Food Pantry that was stocked by the students for the students
- Instead of throwing away left over lunches, students wanted to preserve it for students to take home



## Professional Development at ECA

- Implemented weekly professional development for staff– 1 hour per week
- Cultural competence training-- Bus trip to neighborhoods and home schools of students
  - Broken down by zip codes and SW interns provided demographic statistics such as: median income, average bus ride commute to ECA, % with less than a HS diploma, etc.
- Trauma Informed care and school mental health
  - What is trauma?
  - ACEs Study
  - Risk & Protective Factors
  - Instilling Resiliency
  - Classroom techniques for addressing trauma
- *Paper Tigers Documentary*
  - Example of trauma-informed care implemented in a Washington State alternative high school





## Support Academic Learning (Persistence)

- Partnership with Columbus State Community College
- 2 teachers certified to teach college courses at ECA
  - *Highly protective as students already have relationship with school and teachers*
  - *Give students opportunities to take credits, but still be in safe, supportive environment*
- 3 students matriculated to CSCC campus to take courses after graduating from ECA in 2016
  - *Modeled for peers at ECA the results of the process*
- Another 8-11 students successfully completed college credits at the end of the academic year
  - *Supporting persistence across the P-16 pipeline*



# What does all this mean?



## High School Test Passage Rate

The High School Test Passage Rate component represents the number of students who passed all five state tests that are required for graduation.

Students who Passed all Five Tests..... 71.4%

**RATING**

**Exceeds Standards**

[VIEW MORE DATA](#)



## Gap Closing

The Gap Closing component shows how well schools are meeting the performance expectations for our most vulnerable populations of students in English language arts, math and graduation.

Annual Measurable Objectives.....11.1

**RATING**

**Meets Standards**

[VIEW MORE DATA](#)



## Graduation Rate

The Graduation Rate component looks at the percent of students who are successfully finishing high school with a diploma in four, five, six, seven or eight years.

### Graduation Rates

20.4% of students graduated in 4 years  
 35.1% of students graduated in 5 years  
 33.6% of students graduated in 6 years  
 33.0% of students graduated in 7 years  
 38.8% of students graduated in 8 years  
 32.6% is the weighted average of all graduation rates.

[VIEW MORE DATA](#)

**4-YEAR RATING**

**Meets Standards**

**5-YEAR RATING**

**Meets Standards**

**6-YEAR RATING**

**Meets Standards**

**7-YEAR RATING**

**Meets Standards**

**8-YEAR RATING**

**Meets Standards**

**COMBINED RATING**

**Meets Standards**

- Collaboration among staff, teachers, and administrators in the school is key.
- There is more to school success than what happens in the classroom in dropout recovery settings.
- Students need opportunities to connect with peers, staff, and the school in other ways (i.e., sport, school events, additional supports).
- Data and tracking can drive decisions focused on school improvement and need for specific, targeted school and community partnerships.





## Lessons and Implications at ECA

- Recognized high level of nonacademic need among students
  - Supported need for two year-long social work interns.
- Attendance was low on days when Columbus City was out of school
  - School decided to align days off school with city schools (i.e., students had siblings attending these schools).
- High percentage ride buses and are employed; issues getting to school on time were evident
  - School flipped “tutoring period” to first period rather than 4th period.
- Youth reported difficulty concentrating in class
  - School identified and working to focus professional development on ways to engage youth who have difficulty concentrating in class and those in need of special education services.
- New legislation and infrastructure support
  - The overall school, group, and individual attendance tracking aligns with House Bill 410 (any student under 18 must be contacted after missing 40 hours of school).



## References

- <sup>1</sup>Alliance for Excellent Education (2010). High School Dropouts in America [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from: <https://34.231.97.227/wp-content/uploads/HighSchoolDropouts.pdf>
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- <sup>4</sup>Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010
- <sup>5</sup>Harris, L. & Ganzglass, E. (2008). Creating post-secondary pathways to good jobs for young school dropouts: The possibilities and the challenges. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.
- <sup>6</sup>Rumberger R., Lim S. (2008). Why students drop out of school: A review of 25 years of research. Retrieved from [http://cdrp.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs\\_reports.htm](http://cdrp.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs_reports.htm)
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- <sup>10</sup>Rodriguez, L. F., & Conchas, G. Q. (2009). Preventing Truancy and Dropout among Urban Middle School Youth: Understanding Community-Based Action from the Student's Perspective. *Education and Urban Society*, 41(2), 216-247.
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