Effective Aspects of Reengagement and Recovery Programs in Southeastern Wisconsin High Schools

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Abstract: *The number of students in the United States who did not complete high school decreased by 27% from 2008 to 2012 (Alliance for Excellent Education, America's Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises, & The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, 2015). This is a positive trend. High schools can help students complete school and prepare for career and technical education (CTE) by incorporating (a) career academies, (b) dual enrollment, (c) paid employment/internships, (d) flexible scheduling, and (e) social services. The purpose of this study was to determine the presence of these proven characteristics in Reengagement and Recovery Programs in Southeastern Wisconsin. Twenty-seven of 85 survey responses were returned, for a response rate of 31.7%. It was found that a majority of programs provided flexible programs and support services, but were not focused on providing students career and occupational credentials. The study underscores the need for a stronger focus on CTE in high schools.*

The number of students in the United States who did not complete high school decreased by 27% from 2008 to 2012 (Alliance for Excellent Education, America's Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises, & The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, 2015). This is a remarkable accomplishment and is largely attributed to federal policies enacted in 2008. One policy in particular required that school districts intervene in high schools that have below a 60% graduation rate (Alliance for Excellent Education et al., 2015).

Although this drop is cause for celebration, there is more work to do. In 2014, there were still 1,040 high schools in the United States that had below a 60% graduation rate, down from 1,812 in 2008. The students attending these low-graduation-rate high schools are disproportionately students of color and students from low-income families. African American students make up less than 16% of the K–12 population nationwide, but in these high schools, they make up 40% of the student body (Alliance for Excellent Education et al., 2015). In 15 states, the gap in high school graduation rates between African American and White students is more than 15 percentage points. This gap grew in nine states over the past four years. In addition, 12 states have a gap of 15 percentage points or more between the graduation rates of White and Latino students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

To gain insight into the low rates of high school completion for students with disabilities, the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 conducted interviews with parents and students during the period from 2000 to 2003 (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Marder, 2003). For students with a disability, slightly more than one of every four (26%) dropped out before finishing high school. High rates of absenteeism, disciplinary problems at school, and grade level retention were precursors to dropping out. Two thirds of out-of-school youth with disabilities were male, and nearly two thirds were from households with low ($25,000 or less) or moderate ($25,001 to $50,000) annual incomes. Slightly more than one fifth were African-American (21%) and 13% were Hispanic. Approximately four of every five students who left high school early had been diagnosed with a learning disability (67%) or emotional disturbance (14%; Wagner et al., 2003).

The average annual income for students who do not complete high school is nearly $15,000 less than for a high school graduate (as cited in Alliance for Excellent Education et al., 2015). Students who leave high school are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetimes; and nearly three of every four males in prison did not complete high school (Illinois Task Force on Re-Enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School, 2008). Costs of not completing high school may also be social and psychological in nature, including the lost opportunity of being able to attend postsecondary education and an increase in the potential for personal health risks (Pleis, Lucas, & Ward, 2010; Zajacova, 2012). Benefits to society include an increase in economic health due to increased wages and lower costs for incarceration and social services.

Approaches to Reengage and Recover High School Dropouts

Reengaging and recovering students who dropped out requires approaches that meet widely varied personal needs, learning styles, and life situations. Some programs have reenrolled students who have dropped out of school and successfully helped them to graduate from high school and make the transition into postsecondary education, training, or employment (Illinois Task Force on Re-Enrolling, 2008). The structures of these types of programs have varied, suggesting that students require several options, and that no one structure will meet the needs of all students. Those programs that have been successful include (a) full-time, comprehensive year-round programs; (b) part-time, flexible work and study programs; (c) online programs; (d) dual enrollment programs with community college classes; and (e) GED programs.

Regardless of the structure of the program, other key elements that should be considered include (a) establishing an effective learning environment, (b) utilizing a curriculum aligned with state standards, (c) ensuring teachers have recent professional development, and (d) incorporating

positive rewards and approaches rather than punitive ones (Southern Regional Education Board, 2013).

High-performing reengagement programs are successful in attracting students when they offer effective program characteristics that facilitate completion of necessary academic courses coupled with an eye on career development and/or employment (Bloom, 2010). In addition to those named above, common characteristics of dropout recovery programs that effectively achieve these outcomes include (a) career academies with occupational credentials; (b) career-oriented curricula contextualized to the real world beyond high school; (c) paid work experience; (d) mental health and case management support services; (e) flexible, self-paced programs; and (f) adult relationships and connections (Bloom, 2010; Cooper, Ponder, Merritt, & Matthews, 2005; Fleischman & Heppen, 2009; Martin & Halperin, 2006; Vargas, 2015; Zammitt & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2011). Each of these is described below.

Career academies with occupational credentials. One characteristic that has proven successful in students' completion of academic prerequisites for postsecondary education and long-term gains in income from employment is the career academy model. A career academy merges the requirements for completing a college-preparatory academic core with those of completing a planned sequence of career courses (Bloom, 2010). The curriculum is integrated with occupational certificates, licenses, and credentials students acquire as they complete course content. High Schools That Work operates more than 1,200 high school sites that use the career academy model to raise student achievement and graduation rates (Southern Regional Education Board, 2013). Its Fred J. Page High School, for example, offers courses and postsecondary licensing opportunities in agriculture, media technology, marketing education, drafting, family and consumer sciences, health care, and technology engineering education. Bloom (2010) found that retention rates and labor market earnings for high-risk students in career academies were significantly higher; earnings were 17% higher than non-academy students eight years after they left high school. Another report found that career academies were a key factor in students' completing their education (What Works Clearinghouse, 2015).

Career-oriented curricula contextualized to the real world beyond high school. Another effective characteristic commonly cited in research literature is the use of career-oriented curricula that meets employers' needs. Students can relate daily instructional processes to the experiences they will have on the job (Malian & Love, 1998; Rutschow & Crary-Ross, 2014). Social skills and workplace behaviors, for example, can be learned in the classroom and generalized to the employment environment (Johnson, Mellard, & Lancaster, 2007). Martin and Halperin (2006) note that successful programs make extensive investments in curricula that prepare students for post-graduation employment, entry-level positions, and advancement in the world of work. They cite Improved Solutions for Urban Systems (ISUS), a nonprofit organization operating three charter schools in Dayton, Ohio, that has been successful in reconnecting out-of-school youth through the use of curricula that is closely aligned with hands-on training required for high-demand fields. Transformational learning and performance occur when students can connect the curriculum to the demands of employers, the ability to obtain employment, and the world beyond high school (Fleischman & Heppen, 2009).

Paid work experience. Students need income to support themselves and their families. Providing real work experience to students while they are in school is an effective research-based practice (O'Connor, Kuebler, & Siddiqui, 2010). Jobs can help young people prepare for the real world and give them work experience that they can apply throughout their lives. Students benefit from the opportunity to explore and reflect on their likes, dislikes, and interests related to particular employment (Trainor, Smith, & Kim, 2012). Work experiences also build the student's social capital.

Youth unemployment is a serious problem with overall rates exceeding 17% and summer unemployment rates at 50% for young people between the ages of 16 and 24 (Kujjo, 2013). Changes in the labor market have dramatically reduced the opportunities for young people to find employment. Only after students who dropped out discovered they could find no jobs and their employment prospects were hopeless did they reluctantly return to re-enroll in high school (Berliner, Barrat, Fong, & Shirk, 2008). Work opportunities that provide students much-needed income and are related to their educational program increase retention and completion rates (Martin & Halperin, 2006). Providing young people with opportunities for paid work may be useful as an engagement tool and as a strategy for improving long-term labor market outcomes (Bloom, 2010). Academic programs that incorporate paid employment have shown significant gains in postschool employment (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Malloy, Drake, Abate, & Cormier, 2010). Several researchers have noted the common practice among large national recovery programs and small community-based organizations alike to provide some combination of education and employment (Bloom, 2010).

Mental health and case management support services. Many students who drop out of high school have mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression, and a sense of hopelessness; Berliner et al., 2008). Providing a thorough mental health assessment to understand the needs of a student leads to the selection of an appropriate recovery program and individualized learning plan (Zammitt & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2011). High-performing dropout recovery programs employ the use of case managers, social workers, and other mental health professionals to address barriers to learning (Martin & Halperin, 2006; Rutschow & Crary-Ross, 2014). Gonzalo Garza Independence High School in Austin, Texas, was cited by Martin and Halperin (2006) as an exemplary recovery program because it partners with Communities In Schools, a community-based organization that provides free support services to students, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, and health referrals.

Flexible, self-paced programs. Family crises, employment, pregnancy, gang pressure, and other life circumstances pull students in directions that stall high school completion (Berliner et al., 2008; Hynes, 2014). Programs that offer scheduling flexibility accommodate students' personal and family needs and allow students concurrently to work, receive job training, or attend credit-bearing courses at adult education or vocational schools (Shannon & Bylsma, 2003). Berliner et al. (2008) emphasize that recovery programs need to offer flexible options to students to permit them to make up failed course credits quickly and remedy credit deficiencies at their own pace, or students will become discouraged and quit. Cooper et al. (2005) noted the example that "each Sunday from 1:00–6:00 p.m., Grimsley opened its doors to allow students to participate in make-up time, which was filled with planned instruction that they had missed during regular school hours" (p. 6). Flexible scheduling and self-paced programs can take the form of open-entry, open-exit where students work through curricular modules at their own pace, or extended day, weekend, and year-round programming where students can attend at times they have available (Martin & Halperin, 2006).

Adult relationships and connections. Unconditional caring is an essential principle in effective approaches to support the success of students (Malloy et al., 2010). Caring adults play a central role in the recovery and subsequent outcomes of high school dropouts (Bloom, 2010). They personalize the environment and recognize students as individuals (Fleischman & Heppen, 2009). They listen carefully to establish starting points to engage students. They become thoroughly familiar with students across many domains, including background information, interests and preferences, underlying abilities and aptitudes, personal styles, interpersonal relationships, self-determination, academics and intelligence, and employment-related skills (Kortering & Braziel, 2008). Caring principals, teachers, coaches, and counselors spend individual time with students, are available, are helpful and understanding, and find creative ways to help each individual student succeed (Hynes, 2014; Lagana-Riordan et al., 2011). They leverage their personal relationships to persuade students to return and, knowing their students, promptly facilitate appropriate reentry academic and support services (Berliner et al., 2008). Strong relationships and connections correlate with high achievement by students and schools (Cooper et al., 2005; Sinclair, Christenson, & Thurlow, 2005).

Fourteen thousand young adults drop out of high schools in Wisconsin every year (Sullivan, 2012). Nearly half of that total derives from the Greater Milwaukee area. The percentage of Milwaukee residents without a high school diploma outnumbers the percentage with a college degree or better. Wisconsin is not producing enough high school graduates to fill near-term workforce needs. By 2018, the number of high school graduates in Wisconsin is expected to decrease while employment opportunities will increase (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). The purpose of this study was to assess the presence of characteristics of effective dropout recovery programs offered at high schools in the seven counties comprising the Greater Milwaukee area.

Method

Participants

Participants for the study consisted of administrators of traditional and alternative public high schools throughout the seven counties in Southeastern Wisconsin (Kenosha, Racine, Walworth, Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee, and Washington). An Internet search (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_high_schools_in_Wisconsin) provided the basis for a list of public high schools in Wisconsin by county. Representatives from the National At-Risk Education Network-Wisconsin Chapter and other local practitioners who serve at-risk high school students were consulted to ensure schools that focus on the reengagement and recovery of high school students were included in the study. Correctional facilities were omitted from the list. Traditional Milwaukee Public School (MPS) high schools were not included because they channel students with severe credit deficiencies, significant behavioral incidents, and expulsions to their network of partnership and contract schools. Consequently, only MPS partnership and contract schools were selected as participants in the study. With one exception, a former partnership school for MPS that now operates as an independent voucher school, no choice high schools were included in the study. Although choice high schools enroll high-needs students who have left traditional high schools, choice high schools typically do not have educational programs for students with special needs, certified teachers, or specialized resources for the recovery and reengagement of public high school students. The final list of traditional and alternative education public high schools yielded 85 participant schools for the study. Names and contact information for current administrators were found on each school's website. When an administrator was not noted on the website, telephone calls were made to participant schools to obtain the name of the current administrator. The administrator contact information was compiled into a central database.

Constructing the Survey Instrument

A survey instrument was created based on the literature review and gaps in information. Characteristics of high-performing schools and effective reengagement programs were identified. Questions were then developed to identify the presence of the characteristics among survey participants. The final survey consisted of four sections (a) preparing students for the world beyond high school; (b) paid work experience; (c) flexible, self-paced programs; and (d) support services. Each section had between three to six questions.

For many questions, the response consisted of a Likert scale to determine frequency of the characteristics. For example, the question "The program offers national, portable industry-specific occupational certifications, licenses or credentials" offered respondents the option to select *none*, *one* or *two*, *some*, or *several*. A number score related

to a scale ranging from 1 through 4 was associated with each response. As appropriate, questions also included simple *yes* or *no* responses. Each question included an optional section for comments to permit participants to clarify or provide additional information in relation to their response. An initial draft of the survey was piloted with the administrator of a local alternative education high school. Because the survey process was intended to last no more than 15 min, the final survey instrument was pared from 32 questions to a total of 21 questions.

Survey Distribution and Collection Procedures

A cover letter was prepared to introduce the study. Also included was an offer to provide the respondent with a copy of the final report. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included in the survey packet for the return of the survey. The survey packet was mailed via the U.S. Postal Service to the administrators of the 85 schools. After 10 days, follow-up calls were made to encourage administrators to complete and return the survey instrument. When requested, duplicate survey packets were also emailed. Completed surveys were returned by U.S. mail delivery or email directly to the researcher. Twenty-seven survey responses were returned from participants, for a response rate of 31.7%.

Data Tabulation Measures

An Excel spreadsheet was constructed to itemize the survey responses by question item and category. Completed surveys were assigned a numerical code and the responses for the particular survey were entered into the cells corresponding to the question item. The format permitted responses to be aggregated and analyzed by question item.

Results

Preparing Students for Work

Respondents were asked if they provide opportunities for students to earn occupational certificates, licenses, or credentials. Almost half of the respondents (48%) indicated that their school does not provide such opportunities. At the same time, 38% of respondents indicated that some or several classes related to occupational credentials are provided. Fifteen percent reported that they offer 1-2 courses that offer an occupational certification, license, or credential.

Programs With Content Explicitly Aligned to Needs of Employers

Survey respondents were asked if they align content to the needs of employers. This content related to both basic knowledge of an industry as well as soft skills, such as communication, listening, collaboration, teamwork, time management, and organization skills. Fifteen percent of respondents reported that their programs always provide this content to students, while another 15% responded that they sometimes provide this in their program. Eleven percent of respondents noted that they never incorporate this information; and 59% reported that they rarely do.

Selected Program Offerings

The survey asked respondents to indicate the frequency with which their programs offered the following components: paid employment, dual enrollment, open-entry/open-exit, and accelerated options (Table 1).

Table 1

Frequency of Selected Program Offerings

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always
Paid employment	30%	30%	26%	15%
Dual enrollment	22%	37%	33%	7%
Open entry-exit	11%	22%	22%	44%
Accelerated credit	7%	11%	26%	56%

Paid employment. Table 1 shows that the majority of programs never (30%) or infrequently (30%) facilitate paid employment opportunities for students. Fifteen percent of programs always provide this option.

Dual enrollment. Forty percent of respondents sometimes or almost always provide a way for students to earn both high school and remedial college credit. Nearly 60% of survey respondents indicated their schools never or seldom offer students opportunities for concurrent enrollment into college remedial education courses (see Table 1).

Open-entry/open-exit. Almost half (44%) of all respondents almost always offer classes as open-entry and open-exit where students work through curricular modules at their own pace; an additional 22% of respondents offer several courses as open-entry and open-exit. The other one third of programs either never (11%) or rarely (22%) offer self-paced courses (see Table 1).

Accelerated credit. Over half (56%) of respondents indicated that they offer accelerated credit. This allows students to complete programs more quickly and reinforces students' efforts faster, so that they are more inclined to stay with the program (see Table 1).

Flexible Scheduling

When asked, 56% of respondents said their program offers flexible scheduling with evening, weekend, and year-round learning to accommodate students. Forty-four percent indicated that they do not offer flexibility in the scheduling of course offerings.

Support Services

Almost all of the respondents (97%) indicated that their school provides counseling and social services for students (see Table 2). Similarly, almost all of the respondents (92%) noted their teachers are coaches for students and

their programs are relationship-based. One half (50%) of the programs almost always provide students with mental health professionals, case managers, and other caring professionals.

Table 2

Frequency of Support Services Offered by Programs

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always
Counseling/ Social Services	0%	4%	30%	67%
Relationship-based	4%	4%	38%	54%
Health Professionals	11%	22%	22%	44%

Discussion

High schools in Southeastern Wisconsin account for a disproportionately high share of the state's high school dropouts annually. A survey of programs and schools designed to reenroll students who are at risk for dropping out revealed they are implementing many of the characteristics of effective programs cited in literature to reengage and recover high school students. However, several effective characteristics were reportedly used with less frequency. Their absence may be a cause of the disproportionate number of high school dropouts in the region.

Overall, the research on the presence of effective characteristics in Southeastern Wisconsin high schools found that the majority of respondents provide many of the characteristics found to be successful in reengaging students who are at risk of dropping out. Schools offer students flexible opportunities to take classes at different times of the day and on different days of the week. Students can work at their own pace to accelerate credit. Teachers serve as caring adults and coaches, and schools wrap students with additional social service professionals for mental health and case management.

However, the survey findings on the presence of effective characteristics to reengage and recover at-risk students in Southeastern Wisconsin high schools also revealed that responding programs seldom offer opportunities for students to (a) earn occupational credentials, (b) receive explicit instruction in "soft skills," (c) engage in paid employment, or (d) enroll in courses for high school and college credit as part of the educational program. The majority of the respondents indicated that their programs rarely or never address these characteristics in their school programs.

More Than Half of the Schools Rarely Provide Occupational Credentials

Providing courses that offer portable, nationally recognized occupational certifications, licenses, and credentials embedded within the curriculum not only makes the student more valuable to an employer, but also increases the engagement of students. Students recognize the relevance of career and technical education, relating it to the experiences they will encounter on a job (Malian & Love, 1998). Career academies, where a college-preparatory academic core is merged with occupational credentials, have proven to increase retention rates of high school students (Bloom, 2010).

Harvard University recently initiated the Pathways to Prosperity Project as a national movement in response to its report that found roughly half of all young Americans arrive in their mid-20s without the skills or labor market credentials essential for success in today's increasingly demanding economy (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). The study underscores the need for states to create broader pathways for youth to explore their career potential. Pathways should combine the rigors of strong academics with career and technical programs and work-based learning experiences, which provide youth the tools they need to make better decisions as they enter the adult world.

More Than Half of the Schools Rarely Have Classes Aligned to the Needs of Employers

Students who are at risk of failure, along with students with labels of emotional and behavioral disorders, are most likely to drop out of high school and then shuffle among several short-term jobs, unable to hold a position for an extended period of time, in part because they lack the communication, collaboration, conflict resolution, and employment skills to succeed in the workplace (Wagner et al., 2003). Teaching high school students the soft skills required by employers (e.g., work ethic, showing up on time, listening, communicating effectively, as well as providing the specific knowledge necessary for particular industry sectors), prepares students for careers and college after graduation. Students become more marketable to employers and can adapt better to workplace demands.

More Than Half of the Schools Rarely Facilitate Paid Work Experience

Many youth are bored and disengaged in conventional academic classes, yet are unable to explore and develop their career options because of near-record youth unemployment. Paid work experience is particularly important for students who can reflect on their likes, dislikes, and interests related to particular employment prior to transitioning permanently into the world of work (Trainor et al., 2012). Schools, districts, and states have the ability to leverage their community relationships to facilitate paid work experiences for students who would be unlikely to secure the opportunities independently. Facilitating employment helps students earn income and keeps them engaged in school.

More Than Half of the Schools Do Not Provide Dual Enrollment of High School Students Into College Remedial Courses

Tomorrow's jobs will require students to have postsecondary education and credentials beyond a high

school diploma. Based on projections of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 61% of Wisconsin jobs will require postsecondary education by 2018, and 33% of Wisconsin jobs will require a bachelor's degree or higher by 2018 (Carnevale et al., 2010).

The likelihood of postsecondary educational success by students who need to take remedial education in college is extremely low. Only 17% of high school graduates who require at least one remedial reading course and 27% who require a remedial math course earn a bachelor's degree (Vandal, 2010). Students take an assessment exam and are placed into a one-size-fits-all remedial education course sequence that often involves multiple semesters of classes that do not meet degree requirements. This sequence delays their entry into degree or certificate programs and drains their personal bank accounts and financial aid eligibility and, ultimately, their interest in pursuing a college credential.

Dual enrollment into college remedial courses while a student is still in high school is proving to be a practice to create a strong bridge to a credential. For example, Jobs for the Future's "Back On Track" education model provides high school students with instruction aligned to college gatekeeper courses (Jobs for the Future, 2016). High school students are enrolled into a college's or university's remedial course (dual enrollment) and study the remedial course curriculum. When high school students pass the college remedial course, they receive college credit. By taking college remedial education courses in high school, students can bypass remedial education requirements when they enter college and proceed directly to enroll into degree-related courses. By taking courses in high school, students also benefit by not having to pay fees for college remedial classes.

Another example is the Concurrent Courses Initiative (CCI). This was a pilot program in California, involving eight high school-postsecondary partnerships and approximately 1,800 students over two years. Approximately 60% of the participants were students of color; 40% were from non-English speaking homes; and approximately 33% of students struggled academically. Students enrolled in this dual enrollment were provided with college credit for courses completed in high school. Students who enrolled in CCI were more likely to complete high school, less likely to take basic skills courses in college, and more likely to persist in postsecondary education at rates higher than counterparts who were not part of a dual enrollment program (Rodriguez, Hughes, & Belfield, 2012). While dual enrollment has historically targeted high-achieving students using Advanced Placement courses in high school that "count" for college credit, the CCI focused on, and demonstrated success with, students from low-income families and students from historically underrepresented groups.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. While efforts were made to have the survey completed by individuals who knew the program(s), it is possible that some respondents may have been too far removed from the program details to provide accurate data. The construction of the survey and its technical word choice may have been misunderstood or misinterpreted by survey respondents, leading to inaccurate responses. For example, participants may vary in their definition of national, portable, industry-specific occupational certificates and licenses. Finally, the response rate of the survey was 32%, which means that we still do not have information from 68% of reengagement and recovery programs in Southeastern Wisconsin. A better response rate would provide us with a more comprehensive picture of options for recovering and reengaging students.

Preparing Students for Education and Work: Career and Technical Education (CTE)

The high school education landscape must emphasize career readiness as much as college readiness. While rhetoric supports this ideal, recent policy does not. The standards movement has pushed school districts to double down on academics, while career and vocational options have become less available (Schwartz, 2014).

At the very same time, a move toward career and technical education (CTE) is shifting the conversation. CTE is replacing vocational education from decades past. CTE combines rigorous academics with occupational credentials in high-skill, high-demand fields, such as engineering, information technology, health sciences, and hospitality and tourism (Schwartz, 2014). It is clear that schools can do more to help students not only graduate, but also to graduate with knowledge and skills that employers need. High schools can work with postsecondary institutions and partner with industry to provide dual enrollment and paid employment for students. This keeps students engaged, decreases the cost of postsecondary education, and benefits employers. CTE can offer several pathways for all students, not only those who have historically been targeted as needing vocational training to complete their high school education. CTE can be a path to a career or to further education for those who choose to attend a 4-year college program.

Today's students will need advanced training, postsecondary education, and credentials to successfully compete for tomorrow's jobs in a global environment. A high school diploma is a prerequisite. The General Educational Development (GED) that results in a Certificate of High School Equivalency arguably will be insufficient. As an example, some branches of United States military will not enlist applicants who have a GED. The Marine Corps requires a high school diploma and the Air Force will accept a GED, but an applicant must also have 15 community college credits (Campbell, 2016). In addition, increasingly, even entry-level jobs will require some specialized knowledge and postsecondary training or education (Carnevale et al., 2010).

Therefore, it is imperative that schools offer programs that incorporate effective characteristics to reengage and recover students who are at risk of dropping out of high school. By providing a greater repertoire of effective ele-

ments to reengage and recover at-risk students, high schools enhance their ability to achieve greater student successes, school educational outcomes, and economic growth of the community at large.

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