



The National High School Center is a central source of information on research-based high school improvement strategies that help all students learn and become adequately prepared for college, work, and life. Millions of high school students—particularly those with disabilities, with limited proficiency in English, or from low-income backgrounds—need additional support in order to succeed. To address this challenge, the National High School Center supplies tools and products regarding the latest practices and information on high school topics and high school improvement to Regional Comprehensive Centers.

The list below contains brief descriptions of current and forthcoming National High School Center resources centered around a variety of current high school issues. All available tools and products may be accessed via the National High School Center's Publications page (<http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/>).

Available Products

Emerging Evidence on Improving High School Student Achievement and Graduation Rates: The Effects of Four Popular Improvement Programs

This research brief describes methods for improving low-performing high schools based on some of the most rigorous research currently available in the school reform arena. The document identifies lessons learned as well as key practices used to strengthen high schools and is based on evaluations of four widely used high school improvement programs—Career Academies, First Things First, Project GRAD, and Talent Development.



placement of English language learners and offers key policies and useful strategies in building capacity and developing learning environments conducive for all students in obtaining academic success.



Report on Key Practices and Policies of Consistently Higher Performing High Schools

This National High School Center report focuses on successful high schools, highlighting the ways in which many superintendents, principals, and teachers are setting and meeting high expectations for all students. Developed specifically for state leaders, it provides suggestions on how they may support initiatives that are linked with accelerated learning.



Improving Literacy Outcomes for English Language Learners in High School: Considerations for States and Districts in Developing a Coherent Policy Framework

This research brief outlines existing barriers regarding teacher expectations, tracking, and



Sustaining Focus on Secondary School Reading: Lessons and Recommendations from the Alabama Reading Initiative

The Alabama Reading Initiative addresses literacy and includes a

focus on high school students. This research brief summarizes student and teacher outcomes, lessons learned, and other findings from a recent evaluation of the Initiative at the secondary school level.

Webinar: “Leading the Way to a Smooth Ninth-Grade Transition”

This Webinar addresses the transitions faced by ninth-grade students including students with disabilities, English language learners, and other special needs students. The interactive presentation draws on research to contextualize these challenges, provides a review of the findings from key studies on these selected strategies, identifies selected practical strategies from the field to address these issues, and provides a review of the findings from key studies on these selected strategies. To view the Web cast visit <http://www.betterhighschools.org/webinar/default.aspx>

Webinar: “Preventing High School Dropout: Understanding the Research and Useful Strategies to Address the Problem”

Representing both the research and practitioner perspectives, this Webinar highlights key research-based findings and programs related to dropout prevention, including for students with disabilities, English language learners, and other special needs students. The presentation also

incorporates a discussion about a specific state initiative and strategies. To view the Web cast visit <http://www.betterhighschools.org/webinar/default.aspx>

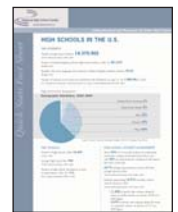
NCLB and High Schools

This policy brief outlines how the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) impacts high schools in the areas of accountability and academic achievement, teacher quality, high school transitions, advanced placement, delinquent and disorderly behavior, curriculum and instruction, and community engagement. Some of the high school issues examined under these areas include the dropout problem, ramifications of adequate yearly progress (AYP) for high schools (and those who do not meet AYP), and by what means high school teachers demonstrate their qualifications.



Quick Stats Fact Sheet: High Schools in the U.S.

This fact sheet provides information and references on U.S. high school students and high school requirements within the last few years.



Quick Stats Fact Sheet: High School Students by Region and State

This fact sheet outlines the number of high school students per Regional Comprehensive Center and State within the last two years.





Forthcoming Products By Topic

Dropout Prevention

The economic consequences of leaving high school without a diploma are severe. According to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, on average, dropouts are more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates and to earn less money when they eventually secure work. Compounding the issue of high school dropout rates is the fact that many of these students also have disabilities. Given that students with disabilities drop out of school at more than twice the rate of their same-age peers, states and local education agencies are in need of dropout prevention interventions that yield positive results. The National High School Center plans to provide a variety of resources in the area of dropout prevention that will help bridge the research-based findings with real-life practice in schools, including the following:

- **Dropout Prevention Best Practices Report.** Features a dozen high schools with effective dropout prevention programs (based on recent site visits by NCEA).
- **Personalization Strategies for Dropout Prevention.** Provides a summary of research on dropout prevention.
- **Dropout Prevention for Students With Disabilities.** A brief summary of provisions of IDEA related to dropout prevention for students with disabilities, including recommendations to states to improve dropout data.
- **State-level Dropout Prevention Policies.** Case studies of state policy designed to ensure that more students receive a high school diploma.
- **Dropout Prevention and State Policies for ELL Students.** A scan of state-level policies designed to prevent ELLs from dropping out in states with significant ELL student populations.
- **Quick Stats Fact Sheet on Dropout.** Key up-to-date dropout statistics for a better understanding of the dropout challenge.
- **Snapshot: New Hampshire's Multi-Tiered Approach to Dropout Prevention.** A close look at how one state is approaching the dropout problem.

Transitions From High School to College and/or Work

High schools often struggle to balance resources so that they are meeting the needs of all students, whether those students are planning to pursue postsecondary education training, go straight to work, or a combination of the two. It can be difficult for the most challenged schools to make sure that all students are equipped with the information necessary to make informed decisions about postsecondary pathways, especially since many at-risk students may be unaware of the course prerequisites for college or other opportunities. Students with disabilities or English language learners have been particularly overlooked in being provided the opportunities and supports necessary for



making a successful transition to postsecondary education.

The National High School Center is developing a resource kit to provide a national context for regional- and state-level understanding and action in the area of ensuring successful transitions out of high school and to help states meet their responsibilities under NCLB (2001) and IDEA (2004), including the following:

- **Early College High School Evaluation Brief.** Features best practices and lessons learned gleaned from a recent evaluation of the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI), a dual enrollment program developed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, for those interested in developing or implementing a dual enrollment program.
- **A Balancing Act: How High Schools Can Provide Adequate Support to Students Seeking Work as Well as to Students Seeking College.** Findings related to how high schools can create and integrate rigorous academic and occupational curricula as well as provide services and support for those applying to jobs and/or college.
- **How Some States are Stepping Up to Ensure Postsecondary School Success.** Links research-based best practices with state and local policies designed to support college preparation and aligned curriculum as well as family engagement.
- **Snapshot: Preparing for Life After High School – How Some High Schools Are Setting Up All Students to Succeed.** Snapshot that provides a concrete and detailed example of a school implementing promising approaches to the transition out of high school and the ways those key practices may be facilitated or hindered by district and state policy.
- **Fact Sheet on Transitions to College and Work.** Statistical information related to transitions out of high schools, such as the number and percentage of students who have entered college or full-time work, are provided as well as a comparison with these figures over the same figures in the past.
- **Field Guide on Transitions Out of High School.** More hands-on guidance, including (a) a self-assessment for schools to ensure they are providing the types of resources to support multiple post-high school pathways; (b) a guide that will outline preparation for a sample of state university systems; and, (c) a checklist for schools to gauge whether their school-to-work programs are rigorous and comprehensive.
- **On Track Toolkit.** Guidance for states to help schools gauge whether their students, as early as the ninth grade, are on track to graduate using information such as course failure or attendance rates that can help predict outcomes and also direct the use of dropout prevention resources.



Transition Into High School

High schools must offer support to help students make a smooth transition into high school where they face new academic challenges as well as new emotional and social territory that can influence a student's decision to thrive in school or drop out. Successful transitions place particular emphases on ninth-grade initiatives that stand to create one of strongest bridges in the K–12 learning continuum. The following are a few of the products that the National High School is planning to offer on topics related to transitions into high school:

- **Summer Transition/Assistance Research Brief.** Describes the types of summer assistance programs for middle school students transitioning to high school. Research findings are discussed and recommendations for the field are presented.
- **Ensuring Smooth Transitions Into High School.** Focuses on best practices gleaned from evaluations of Talent Development and Project Transition.
- **State-Level Support for Successful Transitions Into High School.** Features Florida's K–20 data system, Virginia's algebra readiness initiative, South Carolina's personalized programming involving career awareness and graduation plans, and Florida and Chicago's programs to monitor on-track indicators.
- **Snapshot of Edison High School in Philadelphia.** Snapshot of preparing students for catch-up courses that provide remediation with rigor, and personalization

through the academy structure and teaming as well as through report card conference and advising.

- **Quick Stats Fact Sheet on Transitions into High School.** Statistics on the ninth grade bulge, for example.

Adolescent Literacy

Boosting literacy in high school is an important aspect of accelerating student learning in high schools and will help states meet accountability requirements related to academic achievement goals as well as graduation rates. Focusing on the specific literacy needs of students with disabilities as well as English language learners will further support high schools in their efforts to meet the needs of all students. The following are a few of the products that the National High School Center is planning to offer on topics related to adolescent literacy:

- **Reading Remediation in High School Research Brief.** Describes the types of reading remediation programs currently available. Research findings are discussed and recommendations for the field are presented.
- **Adolescent Literacy Toolkit.** Materials on challenges to providing effective adolescent reading literacy instruction, an overview of reading literacy research, key components for adolescent literacy reading programs, a description of selected adolescent literacy programs, implementation of reading literacy instruction, and adolescent reading literacy resources.



- **Benchmarking Approaches for Strengthening Adolescent Literacy.** Sample literacy benchmarking activities for the high school level.

Innovation and Improvement at the High School Level

As schools, district, and states work to build capacity for high school improvement, an array of innovations are being put in place, particularly in regard to turning around low-performing schools and opening up new high schools such as small learning communities and charter schools. One area of innovation and improvement addressed by the No Child Left Behind Act relates to restructuring of poor-performing high schools. The following are a few of the products that the National High School Center is planning to offer on topics related to high school restructuring:

- **High School Conversions to Small Schools and Small Learning Communities.** Describes the effects of small schools and small learning communities on student achievement. Recommendations for the field are presented.
- **States Progress Toward High School Restructuring.** As many Title I high schools approach their fifth year of failing to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP), many states and districts are struggling to navigate the new waters of school restructuring as required in such cases under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. The following brief outlines the provisions of the law related to restructuring and includes

strategies that states and districts are undertaking to meet their obligations under the law, particularly at the high school level.

Strategies for Reaching All Learners

There are numerous approaches to teaching and learning developed specifically for special needs populations that can be effectively applied to general education students at the high school level as well. Tiered instructional interventions, such as Response to Intervention (RTI), which involve progressively customized approaches for meeting individual student learning needs, are examples. The following are a few of the products that the National High School Center is planning to offer on topics related to reaching all learners:

- **Individualized Learning Plans Research Brief.** Describes IEPs and how they affect student learning and achievement. Research findings are discussed and recommendations for the field are presented.
- **Differentiated Instruction Research Brief.** Describes differentiated instruction and how it affects student learning and achievement. Research findings are discussed and recommendations for the field are presented.
- **Implications of Response to Intervention for High Schools.** Provides information on the implications of RTI at the high school level. RTI is an example of a more targeted approach to instruction that can assist struggling learners of all kinds. The RTI approach means students are more regularly monitored to determine progress—and



instruction is more regularly customized to meet individual student needs.

- **Implications of IDEA for High Schools Policy Brief.** Looks at the most recent reauthorization of IDEA and its impact on secondary school students in the following areas: accountability and academic achievement; highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals; student discipline; secondary transition; funding; student identification; over-representation; school choice and supplemental services; identification of students with specific learning disabilities; as well as school monitoring and enforcement.

Course Rigor

The goals of No Child Left Behind include ensuring that all students learn to high levels and that they also graduate from high school prepared for college, work and beyond. One step toward achieving this goal is to ensure that all students are adequately prepared to graduate with course requirements coupled with the rigorous course

content that will result in a meaningful diploma. The following are examples of products that the National High School Center is planning to offer on topics related to course rigor:

- **What We Know About the Impact of High School Graduation Requirements.** Reviews twenty years of research on course graduation requirement (CGR) policy. Much of the research focuses on the impact of state level policy upon students.
- **Use of Extended Instructional Time Research Brief.** Describes various approaches to using extended instructional time for optimal student achievement outcomes. Research findings are discussed and recommendations for the field are presented.

For more information please contact Joseph R. Harris, Ph.D., the Interim Director of the National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) at 1-800-634-0503.

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