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National High School Center Releases Snapshot of State's Innovative Approach to Combat the Dropout Problem

Washington, D.C. – The National High School Center, funded by the U.S. Department of Education and housed at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), has released a snapshot highlighting the New Hampshire Department of Education's innovative approach in data collection and analysis at the school level to unlock the dropout problem. The snapshot, "New Hampshire's Multi-Tiered Approach to Dropout Prevention," examines the implementation of *Achievement in dropout Prevention and Excellence* (APEX II), a dropout prevention program designed to reduce the state's dropout rate 20% by 2009.

Through APEX II, data is collected at the school level and made readily available to teachers and administrators to identify potential dropouts, as well as those who leave high school. With this information, plans of action are formed for individuals and groups of students who demonstrate the most risk, and data is analyzed to uncover the cause(s) of high school disengagement and misbehavior. APEX II is designed to achieve the following five outcomes:

- Significantly reduce the dropout rate in high schools;
- Reduce suspension and expulsion rates through a school-wide positive behavioral system;
- Develop programs for at-risk eighth graders to ensure successful transition to high school;
- Provide intensive school-to-career services for current dropouts so they have a chance to complete high school; and
- Expand capacity for the state to implement proven dropout prevention programs through expanded technical assistance and professional development opportunities.

In conjunction with the APEX II model, two other strategies: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Rehabilitation, Empowerment, Natural supports, Education and Work (RENEW) are being employed in the participating schools. PBIS defines appropriate student behaviors and give schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective school-wide disciplinary practices. Students with disabilities, emotional, and behavioral challenges benefit from the individual systems of support PBIS offers, but need to be identified through a sharp school data collection system.

"Administrators are often afraid of opening up the data for scrutiny by staff – but without the data you cannot unlock the program and solve it. Even small measures of informed prevention can make an enormous difference in keeping students with disabilities engaged," stated JoAnne Malloy, Dropout Project Coordinator, University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disabilities, a partner on the APEX II

program. RENEW, focuses on high school dropouts/potential dropouts with a team of staff members and community specialists who develop individualized school-to-career plans to draw students back to school.

“Having access to student-level data, and the ability to incorporate it in the decision making process in charting and monitoring individual student success is critical,” commented Joseph R. Harris, director of the National High School Center. Tracking data points, such as student attendance, discipline issues, and the student’s academic record early on can assist in identifying and preventing students from dropping out of high school.”

The newly released snapshot is available free-of-charge on the [National High School Center’s Web site](#).

About the National High School Center

The National High School Center (www.betterhighschools.org), established in 2005, serves as a central source of expertise on high school-related issues for all students with a special focus on students with disabilities, students with limited proficiency in English, and students at risk of school failure. The National High School Center is located at the American Institutes for Research, in Washington, D.C., and serves the Regional Comprehensive Centers, a national network developed by the U.S. Department of Education. Subcontractors include Learning Point Associates, MDRC, the National Center for Educational Accountability, and WestED.

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