



## Dropout Prevention and Recovery Report

To: Dr. Salah Khelfaoui, Superintendent of Schools

From: Jeannine M. Durkin, Deputy Superintendent for Student Support Services

Date: March 16, 2018

Dropout Rate Summary				
School Year	High School Enrollment	Adjusted Final Dropout Count	Adjusted Final Dropout Rate	State Final Dropout Rate
2004-2005	3,735	280	7.5%	3.8%
2005-2006	3,722	208	5.6%	3.3%
2006-2007	3,711	165	4.4%	3.8%
2007-2008*	3,573	85	2.4%	3.4%
2008-2009	3,396	151	4.4%	2.9%
2009-2010	3,290	145	4.4%	2.8%
2010-2011**	3,384	273	8.1%	2.7%
2011-2012	3,164	119	3.8%	2.5%
2012-2013	3,112	91	2.9%	2.2%
2013-2014	3,076	113	3.7%	2.0%
2014-2015	3,040	55	1.8%	1.9%
2015-2016	3,137	58	1.8%	1.9%
<b>2016-2017</b>	<b>3,257</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>

\*Indicates error in data submission; students enrolled in a GED program were not counted as being withdrawn.

\*\*Indicates error in data submission; students were double counted, first as school year dropouts and then again as summer dropouts.

### **Trends and Indicators:**

The dropout rate has decreased substantially over the past thirteen years. This year, the district's overall dropout rate decreased from 1.8% to 1.2%, which includes a population increase of 120 additional students in the total school enrollment. Overall, the total count of dropouts was forty in 2016-2017, which is eighteen fewer dropouts from 2015-2016.

During this past year, district and school efforts have continued to focused on research-based practices including: 1) using data to identify students at-risk for dropping out; 2) focusing on early prevention and intervention; 3) offering targeted interventions to support the transition to grade nine and beyond; 4) connecting high school to college and careers; 5) providing alternatives to traditional high school; 6) forming community partnerships to bring in additional resources for

students; and 7) developing a focused plan to re-engage students who have dropped out of school. Additionally, a continued focus area includes targeted action steps to address chronic absenteeism district-wide.

### **2016-2017 Dropout Prevention Action Steps:**

During 2016-2017, we continued to provide the following prevention, intervention and recovery plans that were implemented over the past several years as well as employed new strategies that are in **bold text** below:

#### **District Level**

- Used Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS) data paired with school-based data to identify students at risk of dropping out. Provided training with support from DESE for school administrators and their teams.
- Provided ongoing coaching for school-based administrative teams to support the implementation of Lowell's District Attendance Intervention Plan and Attendance Improvement Model (AIM) in all schools. Maintained the venue for AIM meetings to NFI in order to provide a neutral location as well as to streamline access to community referrals.
- Offered ongoing Journal Training and Tools for tracking and monitoring attendance intervention efforts in Aspen.
- Provided ongoing attendance intervention strategies in grades Pre-K through grade 12 including the following targeted strategies to prevent dropouts:
  - Analyzed student attendance data and conducted Attendance Team Meetings with Pre-K through 8 Principal Teams and High School House Dean Teams. Provided support to school-based Attendance Teams by means of regular check-ins to review data and strategize on interventions.
  - Maintained a district facilitated non-punitive home visit campaign including outreach efforts to connect with students and their families messaging that they are important to us.
  - Expanded collaborations with community-based organizations to bring additional resources to our students.
  - Using established systems and structures to address the issues that were identified for non-attendance including enhancing our alternative educational pathways and collaborating with Lowell Juvenile Court, DCF, NFI Family Resource Center, CTI and other community partners.
  - Continued a summer outreach program aimed to re-engage students who were struggling with attendance and/or dropped out. Provided summer outreach programs aimed to support homeless youth and families and reengage students who were struggling with attendance and/or dropped out.
  - **Provided district-wide training for documenting students receiving non-traditional educational services. Our Special Population Attendance Recording Flow-Chart System (SPARC) is a system of coding that is utilized throughout the District.**
- Maintained a Dropout Prevention Task Force to research dropout prevention models and provide guidance on the development of action steps for a District Dropout Prevention Plan. The team continued to study data on students who dropped out in **SY16/17** in order to identify indicators and trends to enhance outreach efforts to support and re-engage dropouts.
- Increased the number and frequency of home visits provided over the past three years. This face to face interaction with students and families to engage in problem solving and offer links to community and school supports has increased student attendance.

- Provided district-wide Youth Mental Health First Aid, Trauma Sensitive School and Yoga for the Classroom Training for district and school-based staff.
  - Continued to provide support with the Dropout Prevention Team Toolkit to school personnel including an Online Community Resource Guide, Tiered Supports for students at risk for dropping out at each grade level and a Dropout Data PowerPoint Overview Tool.
- **Implemented the second Citywide Attendance Awareness Campaign in August 2017 during the City of Lowell's National Night Out.**
- **Launched the first Attendance Awareness PSA produced and developed in collaboration with Jack Pinard and aired free of charge on Comcast during the months of August and September.**
- **Launched the first Attendance Awareness Billboard at no cost, with the support of Capital Associates, Inc. which was displayed for the months of August and September on the animated billboard located at the 110 exit off of Route 3 North.**
- **Presented at the Middlesex Partnership for Youth Attendance Summit per request to share strategies that Lowell uses to support students and families around attendance and dropout prevention. MPY is governed by a Board of Directors made up of school Superintendents, Police and Fire Chiefs, and other community leaders who work closely with MPY staff to deliver their mission. MPY members include more than 90 public, charter, private and special education schools, as well as educational collaboratives and youth community service organizations.**
- **Collaborated with NFI Family Resource Center in the development of a parenting curriculum entitled, Lowell A.T.T.E.N.D.S. (Lowell Absenteeism and Truancy Training to Engage, Nurture, and Develop Success) a three-week program for caregivers with students who may be struggling with regular school attendance. The curriculum consists of three modules – Attendance Matters, Health and Wellness and Pathways to Success. Implementing Phase I in which parents voluntarily register for the program and Phase II with the Juvenile Court who also refers families and students to this program.**
- **Recipient of a Mass Grad Grant which provided funding for two part-time Graduation Mentors to work with students at risk of dropping out or who had dropped out to identify barriers to success and develop plans to intervene and support graduation attainment. The goal was to decrease the number of students leaving school by tackling this issue via multiple avenues to provide viable alternative pathways which afforded students the opportunity to gain their diploma. Through leveraging our community resources, we formed a stronger, more cohesive partnership with agencies throughout our city that will benefit students and their families. Between January 31, 2017–August 31, 2017 there were 202 total high school students reached utilizing the Graduation Mentor procedures including:**
  - ✓ 7 - Referred by graduation mentors active/re-enrolled in LHS
  - ✓ 11 - Referred by graduation mentors passed HiSet/GED test
  - ✓ 12 - Referred by graduation mentors/confirmed - In State H.S. Transfers, 9-Lowell Charter, 1 Virtual Academy, 1 TECCA, and 1 Walpole
  - ✓ 33 - Confirmed by graduation mentors via outreach – Out of State Transfers
  - ✓ 37 - Confirmed dropouts
  - ✓ 36 - Not SY16/17 dropouts/were Trans GED (they are students that were 15/16 dropouts). Through Graduation Mentor outreach most are still seeking a GED/HiSet certificate

- ✓ **66 - At high risk for dropping out that were still enrolled at LHS but concerned of possible dropping out**
  - All 66 remained active
- ✓ **250 - home visits conducted**

### **Lowell High School**

Lowell High School continues to follow all of the protocols as outlined in the Lowell Public School Attendance Intervention Plan including the procedures as detailed below.

- In the spring before their ninth grade year, Freshman Academy staff begin to collect data on incoming students. With permission from the middle school principals, the District Attendance Office provides the Freshman Academy Director with lists of students with chronic absenteeism from each middle school. These students are invited to participate in the Freshman Academy Summer Compass program to improve student engagement prior to freshman year. Additionally, these students receive invitations to AIM (Attendance Intervention Meetings) the week before school starts in August. AIM meetings consist of district staff and collateral agencies (DCF, NFI and Court Representation) coming together to create action plans for students to reduce chronic absenteeism in their ninth grade year.

A percentage of these students are also invited to a one-week orientation designed to offer additional support for students at-risk (academically, behaviorally, or socially/emotionally). This orientation occurs one week prior to the first day of school and works to acclimate students to the Freshman Academy while simultaneously building relationships with staff and students.

Throughout the year, the Freshman Academy, like other house offices, follows the LPS District Attendance Intervention Plan to monitor these students and intervene appropriately.

- **Early Intervention:** Based on the extensive student outreach data that the Freshman Academy provides, the House Teams are able to start intervention processes during the last two weeks of August before school begins. The House Teams which include the Dean, Guidance Counselors, a Social Worker, a Clerk and a Clerk Scheduler use that time in August to schedule and meet with incoming ninth grade repeating students and incoming tenth graders who, based on the data, are at risk for dropping out. During these face to face meetings with students and families, House Teams start an informal TAT process and set goals relative to attendance including being on time and engaged in academics and activities. Additionally, House Teams assist families/students with accessing outside agencies and supports, signing releases, adjusting academic schedules, reviewing important dates and policies, applying for athletics and or clubs and activities, coordinating counseling in or outside of school, etc.

Students who arrive at LHS after the first day of school are scheduled to meet with a member of the House Team as part of the registration intake process. New students and their families sit with the House Team and set goals for a fresh start and review all policies and procedures for LHS.

- **House Model:** The House Teams use weekly case management meetings and “scorecards” to plan and document student/family outreach. Each team meets weekly to provide student outreach and interventions. Personal House Team “score cards” report house data that

depicts the number and frequency of calls, parent meetings, visits to the home, outside agencies involved, CRA's, etc.

Daily attendance data is printed and reviewed by 9:30 a.m. followed by distribution of plans for additional outreach including personal calls, recording of all parent notifications, home visits (assigned to members of the House Team, the Special Education Social Worker or a School Resource Officer).

- **Quarterly Interventions:** In addition to daily attendance bulletin data, House Teams use other data sources to prepare and conduct outreach for students at risk including progress reports, teacher notifications, and failure intervention reports. Based on this information, team members may schedule student and family meetings, home visits, assign mentors (PALS Mentoring Program offered in collaboration with UMass Lowell students and staff mentoring program includes LHS staff members volunteering to mentor a student at LHS), and/or assist with after school academic assistance. In addition to assigning mentors, the House Dean may also reach out to the advisory teacher of the student at risk and set up a plan of action for that staff member to intervene and assist as well.

House Teams collaborate with multiple school, district and community members to support students and their families. House Deans meet with the District Attendance Supervisor to review attendance data. At these meetings, House Deans also review data on students who are court involved for attendance reasons (CRA) and review data from the District Attendance Monitor who serves as the liaison with the court to plan next steps. House Team members also collaborate with the Special Education Department to review IEPs. Section 504 plans are reviewed at this time as well. They also work closely with the District McKinney Vento Liaisons to assist with families who may be homeless and in need of assistance with a focus on helping students attend regularly. With support from the Guidance Department, schedules and classes are reviewed and possible adjustments may be considered if the team believes a change could positively impact attendance or motivation. Additional academic support is provided in the area of curriculum and instruction to better serve the needs of at-risk students including creating modified schedules, expanding Career Pathway Programs, creating more opportunities for credit recovery, maintaining lower enrollment numbers in courses that serve at-risk students to provide for individualize instruction and support, and offering before and after school tutoring. Some students who may meet the criteria can be referred to the LPS Engagement Center (EC). At the EC, students who are at risk of possibly dropping out or not graduating on schedule are scheduled into on-line credit recovery courses (via APEX). Students can be enrolled into the EC only or as dually enrolled between LHS and EC at the same time.

Advisory period focuses on connecting students with LHS adults in a "non-evaluative" supportive environment. Collaboration with advisory teachers is essential to ensure that students are applying for and receiving monthly bus passes during the winter months. Additionally, Social Workers collaborate with the team to provide no cost bus passes for students in need and at risk.

In accordance with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), students are recognized for their accomplishments relative to attendance and academics with certificates and recognition in their advisory classrooms.

- **Attendance Policy:** Based on the current policy with respect to grades and attendance, students who receive an AF or NC based on poor attendance have the opportunity to meet

with their House Team and set goals and make plans to show “marked improvement” in an effort to recover those credits. Clerks and clerk schedulers reach out to students and families and coordinate meetings that are held before and/or after school and during student lunch times. During these meetings, students review their own attendance data, set goals to recover lost credit, schedule review dates and plan for improvement with their House Deans.

- **Partners in Achievement for Lowell Students (PALS):** PALS identifies Lowell High School juniors and seniors at risk of not graduating on time or at all. PALS youth are matched with mentors from UMass Lowell and MCC with the goal of engaging youth in school and increasing graduation rates for at-risk youth. Mentors are positive role models who become an important part of their mentee’s support system and help expose youth to higher education. PALS provides tutoring support, educational field trips, group mentoring, and one-on-one mentoring.

### Career Academy

At the Career Academy specifically, the team focused on:

- Continued to transform the LHS Career Academy into a Full Service Community School with support from a \$2.5 million federal grant awarded to the Lowell Public Schools.
- Implemented the Innovation Plan for the Career Academy to become a separate Innovation High School in Lowell. The plan included flexible learning time and “anywhere/anytime” online and work-based credit earning.
- Continued the Attendance Improvement Plan that included the creation of an Advisory/Mentor Class shifting towards a mentor/mentee relationship between the teachers and students.
- Reviewed and analyzed attendance data at weekly staff meetings to plan outreach and targeted interventions including maintaining open communication with students and their families through personal phone calls, scheduled home visits and inviting parents to AIM district meetings. Imbedded attendance incentives in the Tier I behavior system with high interest field trips as incentives. Continued school wide attendance competition amongst advisory classrooms.
- Expanded partnerships at The Career Academy aligning with the Full Service Community School initiative. This included successful credited internships, mentoring work-study opportunities and individual learning options for students. Students also engaged in high interested credit earning electives and had access to comprehensive eye exams, service learning, and college dual enrollment courses.

<b>The Career Academy’s Full Service Programming 2016/2017</b>	
<b>Student Services</b>	<b>Participants</b>
After School Courses – Art, Fitness	20
Career Center Job Program	28
Carpentry Internship	19
Community Service Learning	61
College Dual-Enrollment	31
College Visits	22
Engagement Center (EC)	105
Garden/Nutrition Education	27
Mentoring	35

Reproductive Health	22
Summer Program	38
Vision Care	21

**Engagement Center**

- Expansion of the Engagement Center that helps “off-track” youth complete their high school graduation requirements by providing them with an individual student learning plan to meet their goals. Students either enroll solely in the Engagement Center or they are dually enrolled in a full day high school and the Engagement Center after hours for credit recovery. The Engagement Center is located at the Career Academy and services students Monday through Thursday from 3:00 – 6:00 pm. Students are able to work at home as well. The Engagement Center population consists of currently “engaged” students as well as students who previously dropped out of high school and have re-engaged to complete their graduation requirements.

The Engagement Center 2016/2017	
# of Students Enrolled	Graduates
105	34

**New Initiatives for the 2017-2018 School Year:**

**Graduation Walk:** Lowell High School seniors, wearing full graduation regalia, are returning to their elementary schools to model for the younger students the importance of staying in school and graduating. The special event is also an opportunity to celebrate this milestone accomplishment of our seniors.

The Class of 2018 Graduation Walk will be held on Monday, June 4<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, June 5<sup>th</sup>.

**School Resource Officer Training:** SRO training on chronic absences data/graduation mentor protocols to utilize in home visits.

**Targeted Attendance Intervention:** Attendance focus in schools with highest chronic absence rates working with each of the schools administrative teams to establish consistent attendance protocols

**Developed and implemented a Google Document Attendance Tool:** Developed and implemented a Google document with attendance data for each school in district. Data tool that tracks chronic attendance, interventions and follow-up.