

DIPLOMAS NOW EARLY IMPACT FINDINGS KEY HIGHLIGHTS

New report by MDRC looks at first year impacts of multi-year intervention for the most vulnerable students in nation's highest needs middle and high schools.

Large randomized field trial conducted in 11 major school districts finds promising outcomes and points to further lessons.

Diplomas Now combines evidence-based whole school reform strategies with enhanced student supports guided by an early warning system. It integrates the efforts and insights of teachers and school leaders with support from Talent Development Secondary, City Year, and Communities In Schools. It is designed to work in high-poverty areas with the nation's most-challenged middle and high schools. Winner of an I3 validation grant, Diplomas Now is in the midst of a seven-year randomized field trial. An early impact report by MDRC was released in June 2016. Some of the key findings are as follows:

KEY FINDING

Diplomas Now had a positive and statistically significant impact on increasing the number of 6th- and 9th-graders with No Early Warning Indicators

Why This Matters

Having high-needs students end the 6th and 9th grade with no early warning indicators is one of the highest impact moves a school can make to dramatically increase the odds that students living in poverty will graduate from high school. Odds of graduating can shift from as low as 25% to as high as 75% if a student in a high-poverty environment completes the 6th and 9th grade with no early warning indicators.

The MDRC Diplomas Now Early Impact Study provides the first experimental evidence (demonstrated by a randomized control trial) across multiple school districts that it is not only possible to identify students who are on the path to dropping out in 6th and 9th grade, but also to change their course and get them back on track to high school graduation. Moreover, the study shows that this can be consistently done across major urban school districts in the highest-needs middle and high schools.

To learn more, visit www.diplomasnow.org or contact us at info@diplomasnow.org



DIPLOMAS NOW

KEY FINDING

Diplomas Now had a positive and statistically significant impact on reducing chronic absenteeism in the 6th grade.

Why This Matters

In June the federal government released the first national accounting of chronic absenteeism. It shows that 13% of all students, and 20% of African American and Latino students, are missing three or more weeks of school. Chronic Absenteeism has been shown to decrease academic achievement and increase dropout rates. It is one of the ways poverty reduces school achievement and attainment among the very students who need it the most.

The average chronic absenteeism rate in the middle and high schools participating in the Diplomas Now study was 32%, two and half times the national average.

The Diplomas Now early impact results show with the highest level of evidence (a randomized control trial) that it is possible to reduce chronic absenteeism even in schools with the highest absenteeism rates.

KEY FINDING

Being academically proficient in mathematics and English in 5th grade does not protect larger numbers of students in high-poverty environments from developing early warning indicators during the 6th grade.

Why This Matters

Having students leave elementary school proficient in mathematics and English in high-poverty environments is a notable accomplishment. The Diplomas Now early impact student, however, shows that academic proficiency does not inoculate students against the impacts of the middle grades transition, early adolescence, and living in high-poverty neighborhoods.

Fully one-third of the students across the Diplomas Now and comparison schools who were academically proficient in 5th grade developed an early warning indicator in 6th grade. Diplomas Now schools did better than the comparison schools in keeping students who were academically proficient in 5th grade, on-track in 6th grade.

Diplomas Now Schools also did better in keeping students who did not have early warning indicators in 8th grade, on-track in 9th grade. This shows the value of using early warning and tiered response systems to help guide and support students through the perilous transitions to middle and high school in high-poverty environments.

This brief was written by Dr. Robert Balfanz, Co-Founder of Diplomas Now and Director of the Everyone Graduates Center Johns Hopkins University School of Education.

To learn more, visit www.diplomasnow.org or contact us at info@diplomasnow.org

