SREE 2015 Abstract

Getting to the Finish Line: Using 9th Grade Promotion Coaches and Early Warning Systems in Alabama

This presentation focuses on implementation findings from a larger study designed to assess the effectiveness of a ninth grade early warning indicator and promotion team intervention as part of a high school dropout prevention strategy. The study intervention is based on a theory of change and considerable empirical evidence that link ninth grade indicators very strongly to the ultimate dependent variable, successful high school completion. Forty-one low graduation rate high schools within Alabama were randomly assigned to either the “Early Warning Intervention (EWI) Team” model developed at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools or to a “business as usual” condition. In the EWI Team model intervention, a half-time facilitator was trained to organize adults within the school into promotion teams that work together to intervene with students displaying early warning indicators of falling off-track to graduation in the 9th grade and to prevent other students from developing the indicators. These half-time facilitators from across the state met regularly during the two years of their participation to share information across the treatment schools and to receive coaching from the project manager and state department facilitator. Implementation occurred for two years at the first 10 intervention schools and the second 10 intervention schools are currently completing their second year. Implementation findings presented in this paper relate to the work of the promotion coach, including the time and activities related to starting up a team-based intervention system, gaining access to and analyzing student data, implementing regular team meetings, gaining buy-in from administration and teachers, and implementing student interventions. Discussion will center on the relative costs and benefits of this smaller investment versus larger school-wide initiatives, and the success of this network in dispersing information across the state.