



MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Office of Audit Services

**Audit #2002-01: Review of MPS Dropout
Prevention and Re-enrollment Programs**
Audit Recommendations
January 2002

Recommendation #1

In order to expand and improve the value of dropout data provided by the district, it is recommended that district administration review the various dropout and graduation rates and determine which rate can best assist the district with its efforts to decrease dropouts. In addition, the selected reporting rate should be clearly defined in the Accountability Report.

Recommendation #2

In order to identify the reasons that contribute to students not being identified at risk of dropping out of school, it is recommended that district administration review student records and conduct interviews with the students or parents. Should this review indicate that the students should have been identified as at risk of dropping out of school, district administration may want to review the processes the school uses to identify at-risk students.

Recommendation #3

To establish a consistent evaluation process in all schools and to allow for possible cost efficiencies, it is recommended that district administration consider using the assessments that the district has already adopted to monitor the progress of a child's performance to determine if a student is two or more years behind his or her age group in reading and math skills.

Recommendation #4

To determine if the new dropout prevention programs high schools have established are successful and should be replicated in other MPS high schools, it is recommended that district administration should observe the dropout programs that high schools have established and the programs' outcomes over the next several years and determine if these programs should be adopted by other high schools where the dropout problem is excessive.

Recommendation #5

To address the issues that arise from students who are significantly older than the norm, it is recommended that district administration establish a committee that will develop innovative solutions to assist the schools in teaching the students who are significantly older than the norm.

Recommendation #6

To assist in controlling truancy and ultimately reducing student dropouts, it is recommended that the administration ensure the schools follow up on truants in the manner required by Board policy and state statute. This follow-up would include (1) identifying students on a timely basis, (2) immediately contacting parents when their children are not in attendance, (3) sending out

truancy letters to the parents, (4) offering alternative services and placements to these students and, (5) when these strategies are not effective, referring these students to the district attorney.

Recommendation #7

In order for the Milwaukee Board of School Directors and the public to evaluate the academic performance success of the alternative and partnership schools and to hold the schools accountable for their performance, it is recommended that results on the statutory criteria and district accountability measures for MPS alternative and partnership schools be reported to the Board every year. In addition, consideration should be given to including the school performance results in future MPS Accountability Reports.

Recommendation #8

In order to promote parental responsibility for monitoring and encouraging their child's school attendance, it is recommended that district administration (1) work with the city attorney to develop procedures that provide local law enforcement officials the information required to issue municipal citations and (2) make referrals where appropriate under the authority granted in the Truancy and Contributing to Truancy ordinances.

Recommendation #9

In order to ensure a coordinated county-wide effort in addition to a district effort to reduce truancy, it is recommended that district administration (1) ensure the county-wide committee is convened every four years to make recommendations to all school boards in the county and (2) develop a district truancy plan and update it every two years.

Recommendation #10

To reduce the number of students who drop out of school and to increase the self-worth of students who are at risk of not graduating from high school, it is recommended that district administration consider establishing a district-wide program that will use students who are at risk of not graduating from high school as tutors.

Recommendation #11

It is recommended that the district establish a policy that (1) classifies a student as a potential dropout after a specific number of consecutive days of non-attendance, (2) requires schools to contact the potential dropout, determine the reason for their non-attendance and provide coaching to help the student return to school, and (3) requires a report be issued that would be used to measure the effectiveness of the re-enrollment efforts.

Recommendation #12

To effectively return the greatest number of students to school, it is recommended that district administration include a revised definition of a dropout in the contract which states a dropout (a) must be between the age of 14 and 20, (b) must have received more than 15 unexcused absences in their last year of school, and (c) either did not attend school for a minimum of six months or was identified by MPS as a dropout in the district's annual report.

Recommendation #13

To ensure the contractor and MPS understand and agrees to what “successfully re-enters or enrolls” means and that payments are made to all vendors in a manner consistent to this definition, it is recommended that district administration include in the contract criteria that explains what successfully re-enters or enrolls means.

Recommendation #14

Although the primary responsibility for school attendance lies with the parents, it is recommended that, where this is not occurring, district administration develop a program to locate these children from the census database and explain the benefits of a good education and promote the educational programs MPS offers.