

## **I. Rallying Your Community to End the Dropout Crisis**

### **☐ DEMONSTRATE A DROPOUT CRISIS EXISTS**

- ☐ Every 26 seconds a student drops out of high school, resulting in 1.2 million dropouts, nationwide, every year
- ☐ Gather local data

### **☐ DEMONSTRATE THE CRIPPLING COSTS OF CRISIS**

- ☐ Economic Impact
  - Wage Earning Gap
  - Social Services Cost
- ☐ Idleness
- ☐ Productive Citizenry

### **☐ DEMONSTRATE CRISIS IS SOLVABLE**

- ☐ We know who drops out and why
- ☐ We know what helps kids stay on the path to graduation
- ☐ Proven interventions and reforms, with accountability for results

### **☐ DEMONSTRATE YOUR COMMUNITY MUST TAKE ACTION**

- ☐ Identify crucial role of community in ending dropout crisis
  - Diverse pool of stakeholders: educators, parents, business leaders, nonprofits, students themselves
- ☐ Confront skeptics who claim either the crisis doesn't exist, or that all students don't need to graduate from high school
  - Get accurate data in their hands
  - Explain the necessity of a diploma in economic and civic terms

## **II. Understanding Your Community's Dropout Crisis**

### **ACCURATE, LOCAL DATA:**

#### **☐ How big is your problem?**

- ☐ What percentage of students who start ninth grade in your community do not graduate from high school in four years?
- ☐ Each year, how many students drop out?
- ☐ What schools in your community have the biggest problem?
- ☐ During what grade(s) are students most likely to drop out?
- ☐ How early can you reliably identify a significant number of students who absent effective intervention have high odds of dropping out?

#### **☐ WHEN AND WHY ARE STUDENTS DROPPING OUT?**

- ☐ Consider all the points students begin to disengage, and eventually drop out – for some it's 9<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, or even 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- ☐ Look at transcripts to determine:
  - ☐ How many credits were dropouts shy of graduating?
  - ☐ Failure in which courses was most associated with dropping out?
- ☐ What schools have the biggest problem?
- ☐ Why are students dropping out?
  - ☐ Possibilities include: life events, fade outs, push outs and a failure to succeed in school
  - ☐ Surveys to get local perspective

#### **☐ HOW DOES YOUR COMMUNITY RESPONSE MEASURE UP?**

- ☐ Are existing supports directed to right students at the right time?
- ☐ Are current supports comprehensive and effective?
- ☐ What other responses are needed?
- ☐ What current efforts need to be reformed, modified or abandoned because they aren't working?

#### **☐ POLICY AUDIT: WHAT POLICIES NEED TO CHANGE?**

- ☐ Attendance Policies

- Grade Retention Policies / Grade Promotion Policies
- Grading Policies
- Over-Promotion of GED's / Alternative Schools

### **III. Solutions for Comprehensively Addressing Your Community's Dropout Crisis**

- DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE SET OF SOLUTIONS**
- Increase number of skilled and committed adults providing supports to students
- Increase parental support
- Launch and maintain community campaign to improve student attendance
- CREATING SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION**
- Organizational/Structural Reform
- Instructional, Curricular, Assessment Reforms
- Leadership Reforms
- IMPROVING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS**
  - Provide Rigorous College & Work Preparatory Curriculum for **ALL** Students
  - Expand college level learning opportunities in HS
  - Provide supports for students to make transition to college
- DEVELOP DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY SYSTEMS**
  - Establish early warning systems
  - Multi-tiered response system
  - Multiple pathways to success and alternate recovery programs

### **IV. Moving Forward to Create Lasting Change**

- IDENTIFY LEADERS & BUILD TEAMS**
  - Bring together community leaders who will be engaged over a sustained period of time to address this crisis
  - Organize leaders around a measurable, specific plan for your community that they can help execute and keep the community accountable for
  - Tap into existing assets in your community
- ORGANIZE A SUMMIT TO INSPIRE & MOBILIZE SUPPORT**
  - Build community buy-in
  - Report on new/accurate local data
  - Foster dialogue among key constituencies
- DEVELOP COMMUNITY GRADUATION COMPACT**
  - Put your community's shared vision down on paper with real benchmarks, goals and timelines
  - Carefully identify partners whose collaboration will help achieve these goals on time, and with accountability
  - How local assets can be best leveraged to increase the graduation rate
- PREPARE FOR LONG-TERM ACTION AND SUCCESS**
  - Keep key constituencies engaged with a mechanism for checking in on actual benchmarks and timetables
  - Celebrate incremental successes and work to address gaps as they present themselves

### **NOW IT'S TIME TO USE GRAD NATION**

BEGIN WITH THE GRAD NATION ACTION TOOL TO ASSESS PRESENT STATUS:

- IDENTIFY GOALS
- IDENTIFY PARTNERS & ROLES
- IDENTIFY TIMELINE & BENCHMARKS
- ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY

**DRAW ON VAST RESOURCES IN THE TOOLKIT, PAIRED WITH ALL ACTION STEPS IN GUIDEBOOK, TO BEGIN THE WORK IN YOUR COMMUNITY.**