

Factors Associated With 9th Grade Success:

Analysis of First Time 2011-2012 9th Graders in SDP

This brief summarizes preliminary findings of a study that is currently being conducted by the Office of Research & Evaluation (ORE) which: (1) examines factors related to higher and lower graduation rates; and (2) gives focused attention to factors related to the successful completion of 9th grade. The full analysis is in progress, and will be available upon completion.

Study Overview

For a previous cohort (9th grade students in the 2010-2011 school year), ORE used administrative data to explore connections between CTE participation and graduation rates. The results of that study revealed that 9th grade represented a critical crossroads for all students (regardless of CTE participation), and that on-time promotion to 10th grade is a powerful predictor of eventual high school graduation. This follow-up study examines a new cohort (9th grade students in 2011-2012), and expands the analysis to identify factors that may help to identify students at risk of not successfully completing 9th grade or graduating high school in four years.

Why is this study important to SDP?

- **Research has found that the 9th grade year is “high leverage,” having a greater impact on graduation rates than other years** (Neild et al, 2008; Neild, 2009; *Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program Evaluation*, Office of Research and Evaluation, 2015).
- **Anchor Goal 1 from the District’s Action Plan 3.0 is that 100% of students will graduate ready for college and career.** Students fall “off track” for different reasons, and therefore require different supports. Identifying the best support for each situation requires a deeper understanding of the factors that influence 9th grade success, and how those factors interact with each other. It may be possible in some cases to identify potential problems earlier, and to respond while obstacles are more manageable.

*All references available in the full report.

What is on-time promotion to 10th grade?

To satisfy all requirements for promotion to 10th grade, SDP 9th graders must pass eligible courses in English, math, science, and social studies, and accumulate 5 total credits.

What is on-time high school graduation?

Students are expected to graduate from high school in four years. As first-time 9th graders in 2011-2012, students in this cohort were expected to graduate in 2015-2016.

Sample Snapshot

Time Period: 2011-2012 to 2015-2016 School Years
Schools : 55 (SY 2011-2012)
Students: 9,144

Students in the sample were:

	%
Asian	9
Black	56
Latino	18
Other	2
White	15
Female	49
Male	51
Special Education	17
ELL	9

Findings

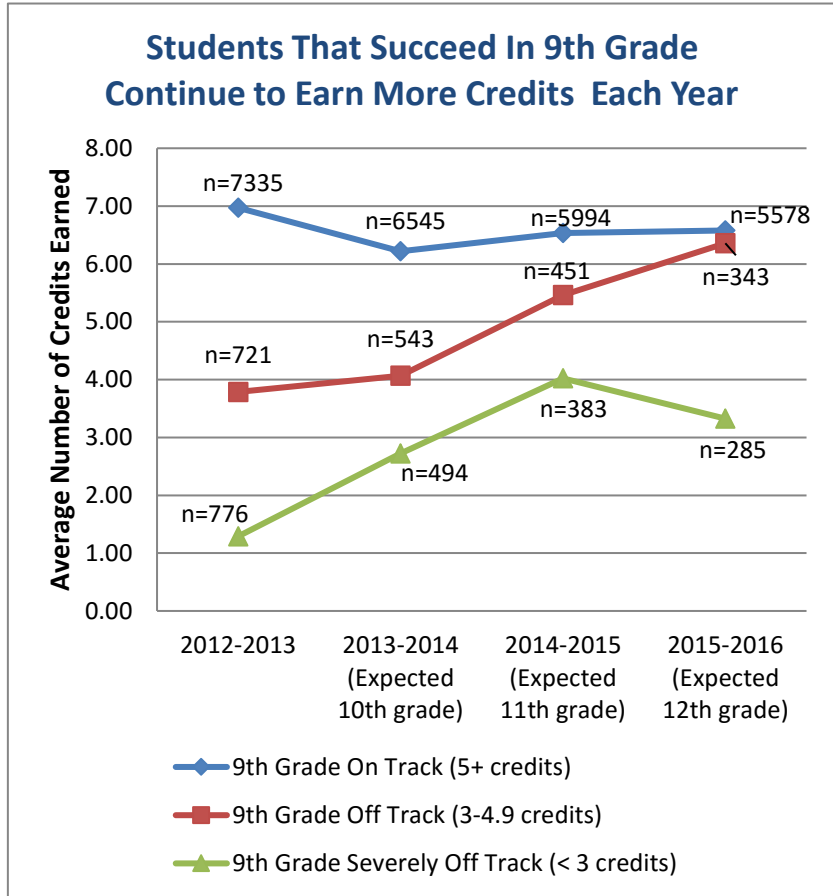
9th Grade Success Predicts

Continued Success:

- 5,578 of 7,335 (76%) 9th graders that earned at least 5 credits were still enrolled in the district three years later, compared with 48% of those that earned 3-4.9 credits, and only 37% of those that earned 3 credits or less.
- Students that earned more credits in 9th grade also earned more credits in subsequent years.

9th Grade Success is, in Turn,

Predicted by: Being female, or *not* having LEP or Free from Tape status. Also, success in 9th grade is related to higher 8th Grade attendance, and higher PSSA math and reading scores.



8th Grade Warning Indicators Predict Success in 9th Grade – But Not Entirely:

- 8th grade warning indicators include: Male, LEP, Free from Tape, Low average daily attendance (ADA), and poor PSSA scores.
- Many 9th grade students with 8th grade warning indicators struggle, but many others are promoted to 10th grade. Thus, 8th grade administrative data do not reliably distinguish which students will overcome the 8th grade risk factors from those who will not.
- *However*, this uncertainty drops quickly once 9th grade begins. Low first quarter 9th grade course marks *are* reliable identifiers of students that are likely to fall off track.

Conclusions/Recommendations

- Combined with previous research, the early findings from this study reinforce the conclusion that 9th grade success is key to smooth progress through high school, and timely graduation.
- Prior to beginning high school, 8th grade data can be used to identify an initial list of students that are more likely to struggle in 9th grade. Providing supports to these students early in their high school career may support successful school completion.
- *Early* academic struggle strongly predicts *continuing* struggle, so the initial list of students should be refined and revised as early as possible once 9th grade begins.