

**1. How will the survey contribute to supporting evidence-based decision-making regarding high school strategies to increase graduation rates?**

High schools use a diverse array of strategies to prevent dropouts and support students in completing high school. These strategies vary widely in types of programs offered, services provided, types of staff who provide the services, how students are targeted or selected for the program or service, average caseloads or class sizes, and frequency of contact with target students. As discussed by the expert panel that advised on the design of this survey, currently there is a paucity of information available on the prevalence and characteristics of various high school strategies to support at-risk students; this survey will help to fill this knowledge gap with consistent and reliable information based on a nationally representative sample of high schools. By enabling the Department, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to understand the prevalence of various strategies and basic information about how schools are implementing the strategies, this study will help to inform policy related to high school program design, identify technical assistance and program priorities, and inform the design of future research on the effectiveness of frequently used strategies.

**2. The survey seems very broad. The Department should consider ways to provide more in-depth information on the strategies.**

In response to OMB's comments, we have revisited the survey questions with the goal of obtaining more comprehensive information on the range of services and programs that schools are providing to high school students who are struggling academically or who may be at risk of dropping out. As part of this process, we revisited the input provided by the expert panel, met with staff for the Department's High School Graduation Initiative, reviewed questions asked on the most recent NCES survey of dropout prevention services and programs (2010-11), and held multiple discussions of options between PPSS staff and the SRI research team.

In order to achieve high response rates for this respondent population, it is important to keep the survey length to approximately 30 minutes. Therefore, we looked for ways to eliminate some of the survey questions in order to make room for additional questions and keep the survey within a 30 minute timeframe.

First, we prioritized the strategies and dropped questionnaire sections on 3 of the original 16 strategies — positive school climate programs, flexible scheduling, and smaller learning communities — because these 3 strategies are often used for more general purposes rather than being focused on dropout prevention.

Second, we added questions for 8 of the remaining 11 strategies in order to obtain a more detailed understanding of their implementation characteristics and to gather more consistent information across strategies as appropriate. For example, the following types of questions were added:

Proportion of all high school students receiving service

- Flagged by early warning system
- Receiving personalized learning plan

- Participating in competency-based advancement
- Participating in career-themed curriculum

Staff providing services

- Who is involved in developing personalized learning plans

Services provided/needs addressed

- Types of services provided by case managers
- Information included in personalized learning plans
- How students demonstrate mastery for competency-based advancement
- Components of a career-themed curriculum approach

Table 1 below summarizes the 16 survey questions that were added to provide additional information on 8 of the strategies. Some of these questions were previously considered but had not been included due to concerns about the survey length (which we have now addressed differently by deleting 3 of the strategies from the survey).

**Table 1: Summary of Questions Added to Survey, by Topic and Strategy**

Topic	Case manager	Academic support classes	Academic tutoring	Student support teams	Early warning systems	Personalized learning plans	Competency-based advancement	Career-themed curriculum
Typical caseload/class size		Class size (Q57)						
How service allocated (all or some)							All or some students (Q105)	
% students receiving service					% flagged (Q84)	% students receiving (Q99)	% students receiving (Q106)	% students receiving (Q110)
Staff/agency that provide service						Who develops (Q101)		
Services provided/needs addressed*	What case mgrs do (Q13)					What's included in plans (Q102)	How students demonstrate competency (Q108)	Components of approach (Q112)
How often service is provided	How often (Q14)		How often provided (Q71)	How often they meet (Q82)	How often checked (Q91)	How often reviewed (Q103)		

The net impact of these revisions increases the total number of survey questions from 108 to 113 (by dropping 11 items and adding 16 new items). However, respondents will not have to respond to all survey questions, only those for the specific strategies that they are currently implementing. Overall, we expect that the average survey response time will remain close to 30 minutes.

Table 2 below shows all of the implementation topics that are covered for all 13 strategies that are included in the revised survey. Survey additions are highlighted in blue.

In addition, we have also changed the name of the survey from “High School Reform Study” to “Study of High School Strategies to Improve Graduation Rates” to more closely reflect the purpose and content of the survey.

Topic	Case manager	Adult mentoring	Access to Social Services	Credit recovery	Accelerated academic programs	Academic support classes	Academic tutoring	Student support teams	Early warning systems	Middle to high school transition	Personalized learning plans	Competency-based advancement	Career-themed curriculum
Have/don't have	Q5	Q15	Q25	Q33	Q42	Q53	Q62 (mandated)	Q75	Q83	Q93	Q98	Q104	Q109
Typical caseload/class size	Q6	Q24	N/A	Q41	N/A	Class size (Q57)	Q69	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
How service allocated (all or some; voluntary or mandatory), participation requirements	Q7	Q16, Q22	N/A	Only some students	Q43, Q50	Q54	Only some students	Only some students	Q85 (derive all or some students)	Q95	Q99 (derive all or some students)	All or some students (Q105)	Q110
% of student offered service	N/A	N/A	N/A	Q34	Q44	N/A	N/A	N/A	NA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% students receiving service	Q8	Q17	Q28, Q32	Q40	Q46	Q55	Q63, Q74	Q76	% flagged (Q84)	Q96	% students receiving (Q99)	% students receiving (Q106)	% students receiving (Q110)
Which students targeted, what grades	Q9	Q18	N/A	Q35	Q45	Q56	Q64	Q77	Q85	Q97	Q100	Q107	Q111
Staff/agency that provide service, info to match student to provider	Q10 Qualifications, Q12	Q19, Q21	Q27	Q39	Q49	Q59	Q65, Q67	Q80	Q86, Q87, Q89, Q90	N/A	Who develops (Q101)	N/A	N/A
Services provided/needs addressed*	What case mgrs do (Q13)	Q20	Q26, Q29, Q30, Q31	Part of the definition	Q51, Q52	Q60	Q72, Q73	Q78, Q79, Q80, Q81	Q85, Q86, Q88, Q92	Q94	What's included in plans (Q102)	How students demonstrate competency (Q108)	Components of approach (Q112)
Location of service delivery/how delivered	Q11	N/A	Q27, Q31	Q36, Q37	Q47, Q48	Q61	Q68, Q69	Q79	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
When service offered, how often	How often (Q14)	Q22, Q23	N/A	Q38	N/A	Q58	Q70 How often provided (Q71)	How often they meet (Q82)	How often checked (Q91)	Q94	How often reviewed (Q103)	N/A	N/A
Who pays for service	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Q66	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Table 2: Survey Coverage of Specific Implementation Topics for Various High School Strategies**

Blue shading indicates new questions. All question numbers have been updated to reflect revised survey dated 2-3-15. Some questions may address more than one topic.