Jeff Cranmore
EDCI 6460, UNT
Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

The Role of School Counseling in Dropout Prevention

As school dropout rates continue to increase, the economic, social and political impact ripples into all aspects of society- across the nation and across the world. Most states, including Texas, have enacted policies to combat the alarming rates at which students fail to complete high school. Often school counselors identify students at-risk of not completing high school and work with these students to develop educational plans for their futures. Numerous programs exist to help schools and counselors in addressing the needs of these at-risk students. Most of these programs call for schools to provide mentorship opportunities for students, real-world learning opportunities, and involvement of the entire community.

Vocabulary Terms:

The Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2010) defines the following terms:
- *Annual Dropout Rate*: The percentage of students who drop out of school during one school year.
- *Completion rate*: A completion rate is the percentage of students from a class of beginning ninth graders who complete their high school education by the anticipated graduation date. The cohort includes students who transfer in during the second, third, and fourth years. A completer may be defined as a student who graduates, continues high school in the fall after expected graduation, or receives a General Educational Development certificate (GED).
- *Dropout*: A student, who attends Grade 7-12 in a public school in a particular school year, does not return the following fall, is not expelled, and does not: graduate, receive a GED, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die.
- *Graduation rate*: A graduation rate is the percentage of students from the same class who graduate by the anticipated graduation date.
- *Leaver*: The term applied to students leaving a Texas public school campus.
- *Leaver reason codes*: Accountability codes to identify the reasons why a student leaves a Texas public school.
- *Movers*: Students who move from one Texas public school district to enroll in another.

Descriptive Context:

For the past ten years, roughly one third of all high school students have not graduated. This has led to 1.3 million students failing to graduate in 2010 alone. On average, 34% of males and 27.1% of females do not graduate. Phi Delta Kappa (2011) reports the following dropout rates:

EDCI 6460, UNT
Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

Racial/Ethnic Group	2007 Dropout Rate
Asian-American	19.3%
Black	46.3%
Hispanic	44.5%
Native American	49.3%
White	23.4% (p. 15)

Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, (2006) list several surprising statistics about high school dropouts, including: 88 percent were passing when they dropped out, 58 percent dropped out with two years or less to complete their degrees, 81 percent recognized the importance of earning a high school diploma, and 74 percent admitted that they would stay in school if allowed to do it over. In interviews and conversations with dropouts, the authors identify five core reasons for students leaving school: Not interested in classes, could not catch up from too many missed days, time spent with people not interested in school, too much freedom in personal life and failing school.

In addition, Balfanz, Fox, Bridgeland, & McNaught, (2009) offer this grim picture of school completion:

- 1.2 million students drop out of high school every year, or one every 26 seconds.
- Graduation rates are between 68 and 75 percent.
- Nearly one-third of all public high school students do not graduate with their class.
- The dropout epidemic disproportionately affects young people who are low-income, children of single parents, or certain minorities — nearly one-half of all African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans in public school will not graduate with their class.
- Approximately 15 percent of high schools in America produce close to half of the nation's dropouts and over two-thirds of its minority dropouts.
- In nearly 2,000 high schools in the U.S., 40 percent of typical freshman class students drop out by their senior year.
- Graduation rates have remained largely unchanged over the last 30 years.
- Among developed countries, the U.S. ranks 18th in high school graduation rates and 15th in college graduation rates.

If the United States wishes to remain a global leader, the issue of high school dropouts must be addressed, to ensure such large portions of the population do not remain disenfranchised and to promote gains to the national economy. Within the nation, leaders of Texas must also seek to address this issue, or risk falling behind other states. Finally, local school leaders must address how to serve all students, and provide support for struggling learners and offer alternatives that allow students to complete their secondary education.

EDCI 6460, UNT
Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

Differing Perspectives:

International Level
School dropout rates remain a concern throughout the international community. Hoffman (2011) explores the reactions of Norway, The Netherlands, and Australia to address the issue. Each nation provides additional support for students in the form of vocational education and training (VET), to better prepare all students for a place in the workforce. One additional strategy involves tying eligibility for income support to the completion of school programs or work training. The Netherlands has introduced a compulsory work and learning program, a system to track student participation, and programs to prevent early leaving while at the secondary level. In Norway, students have the right to three years of free upper level education and each county provides individualized counseling for all students ages 16-21 outside of education or the workforce. The Australian government has sought to decrease their 25 percent dropout rate, especially among the aboriginal population. One program requires all students to attend school through Year 10 and be involved fulltime in education, employment, or training through the age of 17.

Federal Level
The federal government's largest legislative act regarding schools to date was the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Several stipulations require schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in not only academic performance but also in graduation rates. Under NCLB, schools must provide information on not only the entire school's rate of completion, but also by racial subgroups. The seven federal reporting categories are as follows: Hispanic/Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black or African American, White, Two or more races (TEA, 2010).

This requirement uncovered a major discrepancy in the way each state defined school dropouts. NCLB requires states to define graduation rates in a standardized manner, that measures the percentage of ninth graders who graduate from high school four years later, and to report this annually to the U.S. Department of Education. NCLB defines "graduation rate" as the percentage of students who graduate with a regular diploma in four years (National Center on Secondary Education and Transition, n.d.). In 2003, the Texas Legislature passed bills requiring all schools to use the dropout definitions used by National Center for Education Statistics (TEA, 2010).

State Level
In Texas, students served by one school district, must be accounted for the following fall, either through district records or through TEA. All student records are processed through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) using various leaver codes. The most numerous leaver code is generally 01, graduated from high school; however, the number of students failing to return to school steadily increases each year. See Appendix A for the complete list of leaver codes. To combat this increase in dropout rates and to comply with all standards of NCLB, Texas computes completion rates into school accountability and rating systems. State

accountability, federal accountability, and the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and related reports will use the federal definitions of race and ethnicity for all current year (2010-11) indicators. The student groups that will be evaluated under the state rating system will continue to be the five with the following labels: All Students, African American *(new, federal definition),* Hispanic *(new, federal definition),* White *(new, federal definition),* and Economically Disadvantaged (TEA, 2011).

According to statistics from the TEA website, fewer students are dropping out of school in Texas and more are graduating. Their finding show the grade 9 longitudinal dropout rates went from 10.5% for the class of 2008 to 9.4% for the class of 2009 with the actual number of dropouts declining by more than 2,500. In addition, out of 308,427 students in the class of 2009, 80.6% graduated, 8.6% continued in high school the year following their anticipated graduation, and 1.4% received GEDs. Finally, in less than 2 years, almost 1,300 previous dropouts have completed the requirements for graduation through innovative recovery strategies (TEA, n.d.).

District Level
In addition to state and federal mandates, many local districts have created internal policies for identifying potential dropouts and have a variety of interventions in place to offer support for these students. The Region 10 Educational Service Center offers the following four suggestions for all schools in the North Texas area:

- Ease credit recovery
- Promote school attendance
- Offer social – emotional support
- Weaken negative influences (Region 10, n.d.).

 McKinney ISD (MISD, 2010) for example has drafted a specific prevention plan that creates campus level recovery teams to support students. The campus team consists of administrators, counselors and intervention specialists. As classroom teachers notice absenteeism or academic concerns, or as administrators/counselors interpret standardized testing data, they can refer students to Response to Intervention (RtI) teams to offer additional support to students at risk of not completing high school. Possible interventions for students include the use of mentors, home visits, or referral to counseling team to seek placement at the alternative credit recovery high school. As counselors meet with students to discuss options, they often refer to student transcripts to analyze patterns, and make credit recovery recommendations. Lewisville ISD (LISD, n.d.) utilized their guidance curriculum to support students prior to dropping out of school. This preventative measure is in line with the Texas Comprehensive Guidance Model, and offers students opportunities to plan post-secondary options, explore different careers, and provide four-year plans that provide credit recover options for students in need.

EDCI 6460, UNT
Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

The Issue in Practice:

Dynarski, Clarke, Cobb, Finn, Rumberger, and Smink, (2008) look at current dropout preventions practices. They list six recommendations:

- Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out (Diagnostic).
- Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out (Targeted intervention).
- Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance (Targeted intervention).
- Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills (Targeted intervention).
- Personalize the learning environment and instructional process (School wide intervention).
- Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school (School wide intervention).

The guide identifies three categories of interventions, diagnostics for identifying potential dropouts; targeted intervention that are intensive to the specific social, academic and personal lives of the student; and school wide reforms to create a more engaging school climate and lower school dropout rates. The panel was optimistic in that many of the strategies showed promise in reducing dropout rates, at least on a small scale. To see such results, local districts will have to invest in the professional development of the school staff to change not only behaviors but also attitudes.

Balfanz, et al. (2009) suggests three major strategies: establish early warning, creating a multi-tiered response, and providing multiple success pathways for students and ways for older students to recover credit. The authors suggest school leaders use information such as high number of absences, low reading skills and behavioral issues to identify students who may later be in jeopardy of not completing school. These students may need the most intensive and sustained support.

Snapshots of Research:

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2009) released a report on the cost to the nation's economy of high school dropouts. The average high school graduate earns over $9,000 a year more than a high school dropout; while those students earning a bachelor's degree earn over $35,000 a year more. For the class of 2009, if the 1.3 million students that dropped out of high school had earned their diplomas, they would have increased the national economy by $335 billion over the course of their careers, with close to $35 billion added to the Texas economy.

EDCI 6460, UNT
Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

Freudenburg & Ruglis (2007) study framed student dropouts as a chronic public health issue, as education is a key predictor of health, with the health levels between those well-educated and those not having increased in education in past decades. People who complete high school tend to have higher earning status and can afford better housing, nutrition and health services. The authors recommend the following strategies: target cities and schools with the highest dropout rates for intensive interventions, develop, implement and evaluate interventions to increase school completion rates, increase support for health education programs, advocate for research-based interventions to improve health and increase graduation rates, and put the reduction of high school dropout rates as a major public agenda.

Related Issues:

School Guidance Programs and the Role of the Counselor
The Texas Comprehensive, Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program Model outlines four specific components: Guidance Curriculum, Responsive Services, Individual Planning and System Support. Each of these components features areas that relate to dropout prevention.

- Guidance Curriculum: Self-confidence development, motivation to achieve, decision-making, goal-setting, planning, problem-solving skills, and responsible behavior
- Responsive Services: Academic success, school dropouts, attendance, school attitudes and behaviors, career indecision, and college choice.
- Individual Planning: Set challenging educational, career, and personal-social goals that are based on self-knowledge and information about school, the world of work, and their society.
- System Support: Assist in records maintenance of students, and document student progress (TEA, 2004).

In addition, counselors/schools prepare individual graduation plans for all students identified as At-Risk; however, high school guidance counselors often have caseloads far exceeding the recommendation of one counselor for every 350 students, and thus are unable to meet the needs of all of their students. While the American School Counseling Association continues to push for ratios of one counselor to every 250 students, the current national average is one to 460 students, with some states having student caseloads of 700 students, or even 1,000 in California. With such large case loads and large number of non-counseling duties, students often report feeling that they have received little guidance support and are often "just another face in the crowd" (Public Agenda, p. 6). The Texas Counseling association continues to support legislature mandating counseling ratios in schools and the removal of non-counseling duties from certified school counselors.

Turnaround School Research
The success of turnaround elementary schools has prompted many researchers to look for strategies to apply to high school models. Duke & Jacobson (2011) looks specifically at two Texas high schools that have made great strides in changing the academic success level of their

Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

students. Reagan High School had been academically unacceptable (AU) for several years and faced closure. In one academic school year, the school passing rate on reading scores went from 67 percent to 75 percent, and 22 percent to 50 percent in math. South Hills High School made a reading gain of five percent, from 66 to 71, and a math gain of 22 percent, from 35 to 57. The common threads between these two success stories are providing early success to build momentum, creating common planning time for teachers, focus on ninth grade students from the first day, use of data to drive educational decisions, and utilizing comprehensive four-year plans along with providing credit recovery options to increase graduation rates. In addition, each campus sought to increase student involvement, through creation of student advisory councils, creating more engaging classroom environments, and providing adult mentorship for struggling students.

Summary/Recommendations:

The high school dropout crisis remains a complex issue, with many root causes, and far-reaching implications. The social and economic repercussions of such a large portion of our society who fail to complete a secondary education must be addressed, and preventative solutions must be put in place to serve this group of young people. In times of such economic turmoil, an increase in skilled work force and a reduction of reliance of social services can serve only to strengthen the economic growth of the nation. Based on the research and current successful practices from across the nation, local districts should consider the following interventions:

1. Use data to identify students at risk of dropping out of school. This must be more than a mandated list, but a "living" report that expresses the actual needs of students.
2. Provide support for these students. This may be in the form of:
   - Mentorship opportunities.
   - Individual student counseling/academic planning meetings.
   - Options for recovery credits.
   - Developing a graduation plan that addresses the individual needs of the student.
3. Involve community support, such as providing mentoring, internship opportunities, and support for intervention programs.
4. Create engaging classrooms, where students see relevance in class work to their world, and to a much larger world around them.
5. Utilize school counselors to use their expertise in addressing the direct needs of students, rather than spending their limited time on task that can be handled by other groups, such as lunch duty, hall duty, and standardized testing.
6. Provide counselors with additional yearly training on graduation requirements, college admission processes, and changes to the financial aid process.
7. Establish realistic counselor to student ratios that allow counselors to provide the needed guidance, support and encouragement for students to successfully complete high school and post-secondary plans.

Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

Legislative History:

- Texas SB186, 78th Legislature, directed districts to collect data consistent with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) dropout definition beginning in 2005-06. The Completion rates for 2011 are Academically Acceptable- 75 percent, Recognized-85 percent, and Exemplary- 95 percent.

- Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Federal 2011 AYP standard goal for four-year graduation rate is 90 percent.

- Texas House Bill (HB) 3, 81stLegislative Session, defined certain exclusions that the agency must make when calculating dropout and completion rates for state accreditation and state performance ratings. The exclusions are previous dropouts; ADA ineligible students; court-ordered GEDs, not earned; incarcerated adults in state jails or federal penitentiaries not served by Texas public schools; and students whose initial enrollment in U.S. schools was in grades 7-12 as unschooled refugees and asylees.

- In the 2010 - 2011 bienniums, Texas allocated approximately $500 million in state and federal funding for dropout prevention and recovery initiatives.

- In 2006, the Texas Legislature created the High School Allotment, approximately $335 million every year for dropout prevention and college readiness.

- With the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* in the *2001 No Child Left Behind Act,*, as amended, Title I, Part H Section 1802, The high school graduate initiate, also known as school dropout prevention programs, provides for school dropout prevention and reentry and to raise academic achievement levels by providing grants that —

    1. challenge all children to attain their highest academic potential; and
    2. ensure that all students have substantial and ongoing opportunities to attain their highest academic potential through school wide programs proven effective in school dropout prevention and reentry.

- In Texas, students are required to attend school from the age of six through the age of 17, although they may be withdrawn with parent/guardian permission at the age of 16.

    §25.085 (Compulsory Attendance) Compulsory attendance applies to students who are at least six years old as of September 1 of the applicable school year. The law requires a student to attend public school until the student's 18th birthday, unless the student is exempt under §25.086. **17 year-old in GED course**- the exemption from compulsory

attendance for a child attending a GED course who is at least 17 years of age applies if: 1) the child has the permission of the child's parent or guardian to attend the course; 2) the child is required by court order to attend the course; 3) the child has established a residence separate and apart from the child's parent, guardian, or other person having lawful control; or 4) the child is homeless. **16 year-old in GED course-** there is a separate exemption for a child attending a GED course that is at least 16 years old. This exemption applies if the student is recommended to take the course by a public agency that has supervision or custody of the child under a court order. (TEA, 2008).

- Texas Education Code - Section 29.081. Compensatory, Intensive, And Accelerated Instruction identifies 13 indicators for student at risk of dropping out of school who are under 21 years of age. See Appendix B for complete list of indicators.

Sources, Citations, Links

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2009, August). *The high cost of high school dropouts: What the nation pays for inadequate high schools*. Washington, DC: Author.

Balfanz, J., Fox, J. H., Bridgeland, J. M. & McNaught, M. (2009). *Grad nation*. Retrieved from America's Promise Alliance website: www.americaspromise.org

Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J. J. & Morison, K.B. (2006). *The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts.* Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises.

Duke, D. L., & Jacobson, M. (2011). Tackling the toughest turnaround low performing high schools. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(5), 34-38.

Dynarski, M., Clarke, L., Cobb, B., Finn, J., Rumberger, R., and Smink, J. (2008). *Dropout prevention: A practice guide* (NCEE 2008–4025). Retrieved from National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education website: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc

Hoffman, N. (2011). Keeping youth in school: An international perspective. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(5), 8-13.

Freudenburg, N & Ruglis, J (2007). Reframing school dropouts as a public health issue. *Preventing Chronic Disease, 4*(4), 1-11.

Lewisville Independent School District. (n.d.). *Guidance and counseling handbook*. Lewisville: Author.

McKinney Independent School District. (2010). *MISD dropout recovery plan*. McKinney: Author.

EDCI 6460, UNT
Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. (n.d.). How are dropout rates
        measured? What are associated issues? Retrieved from NCSET website:
        http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/dropout/part1.2.asp

Phi Delta Kappa (2011). Dropouts by the numbers. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(5), 14-15.

Public Agenda. (2011). *Can I get a little help here: How are overstretched high school guidance
        systems undermining students' college aspirations.* Retrieved from Public Agenda
        website: *http://www.publicagenda.org/theirwholelivesaheadofthem?qt_active=1*

Region 10 Education Service Center. (n.d.). *Finding the needle in the haystack: Dropout
        recovery best practices.* Richardson: Author.

Texas Education Agency (2004). *A model comprehensive, developmental guidance and
        counseling program for Texas public schools: A guide for program development pre-K-
        12th grade.* Retrieved from http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ModelProgramGuide.html

Texas Education Agency. (n.d.). *Dropout information: How Texas identifies, prevents and
        recovers dropouts.* Retrieved from
        http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=3505&menu_id=2147483659

Texas Education Agency. (2011). *Accountability system for 2011 – Standard procedures
        commissioner of education final decisions*. Retrieved from
        http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2011/standardfinal.pdf

Texas Education Agency. (2010). *Update to annual dropout, completion, and graduation rate
        reporting.* Presented at the Texas Assessment Conference, December 1, 2010.

Texas Education Agency. (2008). *TEA correspondence*. Retrieved from
        http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/taa/legal081808.html

Texas Education Agency. (2007). *Section 29.081: Compensatory, intensive, and accelerated
        instruction*. Retrieved from http://law.onecle.com/texas/education/29.081.00.html

U.S. Department of Education. (N.D.). *Section1802*. Retrieved form
        http://www2.ed.gov/programs/dropout/legislation.html

EDCI 6460, UNT
Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

Appendix A- Texas Leaver Codes:

01: Graduated from a high school in this district.

03: Died.

16: Returned to home country.

24: Entered college early to pursue degree.

60: Withdrew for home schooling. This code may be used only for a student whose parent/guardian confirms that the student is or will be pursuing, under direct supervision of the parent/guardian, a curriculum designed to meet basic education goals

66: Removed by Child Protective Services.

78: Expelled for criminal behavior under the provisions of TECa§37.007 and cannot return. This code should only be used for a student who met the following two conditions: a) was expelled for an offense included in TEC §37.007 b) was expelled from a district located in a county that does not have a JJAEP

81: Left for Texas private school.
82: Left for public or private school out of state.

83: Withdrawn by district because student was not entitled to enrollment in the district. This code is for a student who was not a resident at the time of enrollment. It is for a student who stops attending because he/she has moved.

85: Graduated outside TX before entering a TX public school, entered a TX public school, and left again.

86: Completed GED outside TX.

87a: Enrolled in SBOE-authorized Texas Tech Univ. High School Diploma program or UT-Austin High School Diploma program.

98b: Other.

Appendix B- Texas at Risk Indicators:

Student:

(1) was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years;

(2) if the student is in grade 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12, did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester;

(3) did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student under Subchapter B, Chapter 39, and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110 percent of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument;

(4) if the student is in prekindergarten, kindergarten, or grade 1, 2, or 3, did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered during the current school year;

(5) is pregnant or is a parent;

(6) has been placed in an alternative education program in accordance with Section 37.006 during the preceding or current school year;

(7) has been expelled in accordance with Section 37.007 during the preceding or current school year;

(8) is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release;

(9) was previously reported through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to have dropped out of school;

(10) is a student of limited English proficiency, as defined by Section 29.052;

(11) is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official;

(12) is homeless, as defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 11302, and its subsequent amendments; or

EDCI 6460, UNT
Dr. Mary Harris
May 1, 2011

(13) resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential
placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment
facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home (TEA, 20).