



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

NDPC-SD

## “Lessons Learned in Dropout Prevention: Moving Forward within a Contextual Fit”

### *Creating a Positive School Climate*

Sandra Covington Smith, Ph.D.  
Coordinator of Technical Assistance and Training &  
Senior Research Associate  
Clemson University

Paul Jeff Dodson, Principal  
Tammy Ridgeway, Associate Principal  
Jefferson City High School



U.S. Office of Special Education Programs



National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities



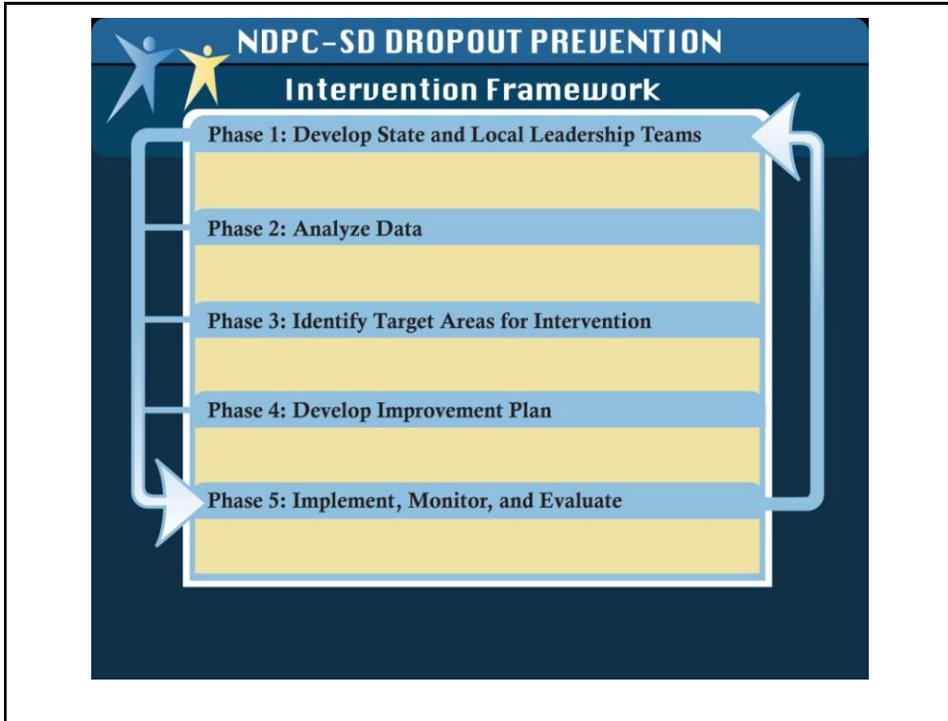
National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

NDPC-SD

### ***Dropout Prevention/Intervention***

- School completion encompasses a broader view than simply preventing dropout
- Dropping out of school is a process of disengagement that begins early
- Engaging students in school and learning is a key ingredient in preventing dropout and keeping kids in school
- Retention has been identified as the single most powerful predictor for dropping out (Rumberger, 1995).
- A focus on enhancing students’ connection with school and facilitating successful school performance is a promising approach for improving school completion

2



The logo for the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) features two stylized figures (one blue, one yellow) above the text "NDPC-SD".

**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

***Risk Factors***

- Education, Sociology, and Economics
  - Demographic characteristics and family background
  - Past school performance
  - Personal/psychological characteristics
  - Adult responsibilities
  - School or neighborhood characteristics

4



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

### *Risk Factors*

- Demographic Characteristics
  - African American and Hispanic youth
- Family Background
  - Family income, SES, family involvement, families who receive welfare, parents' educational attainment, single parent home, limited English proficiency, parent or sibling dropped out
    - Students from SES families are four times more likely to drop out than their high SES peers
- Past School Performance
  - Low grades, poor test scores, retention & age, disciplinary problems, truancy, spending little time on homework

5

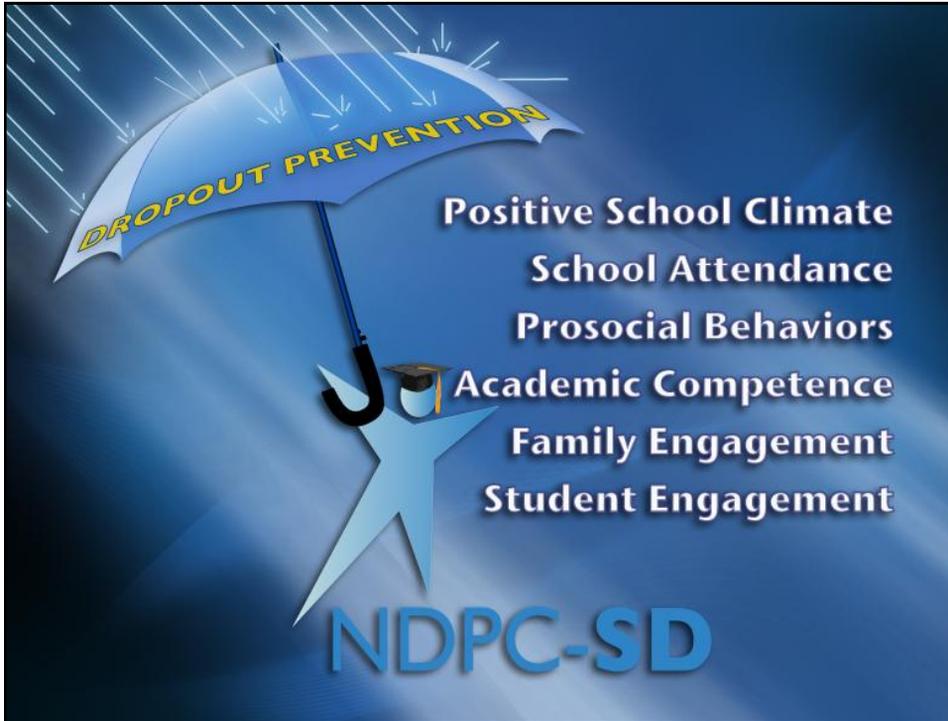


National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

### *Risk Factors*

- Personal/psychological characteristics
  - Commitment to schooling and ability to follow through on this commitment, low self-esteem & locus of control, low educational expectations or plans
- Adult responsibilities
  - Employment, caring for a child
    - Working >20 hr/wk positively associated with dropping out
    - Pregnancy positively associated with dropping out
- School or neighborhood characteristics
  - Poor neighborhoods vs. wealthier neighborhoods
  - **Higher in urban schools; rural; suburban**

6



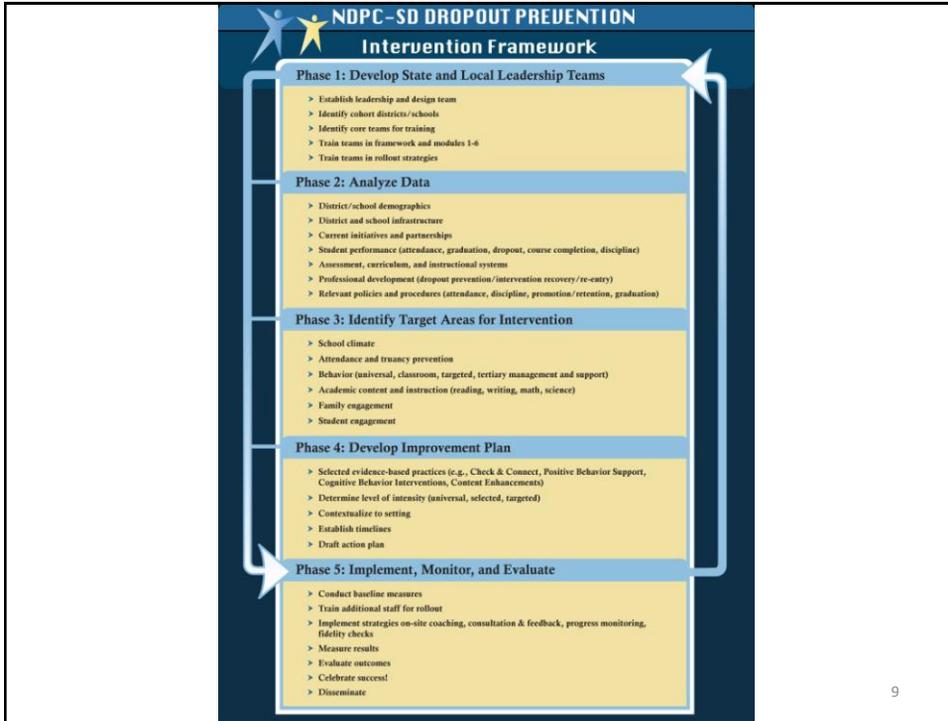
**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

**Program Development & Support**

- Promote and facilitate the implementation of evidence-based strategies that :
  - Promote a positive school climate
  - Promote school attendance
  - Promote prosocial behaviors
  - Promote academic competence
  - Increase family engagement
  - Increase student engagement

8



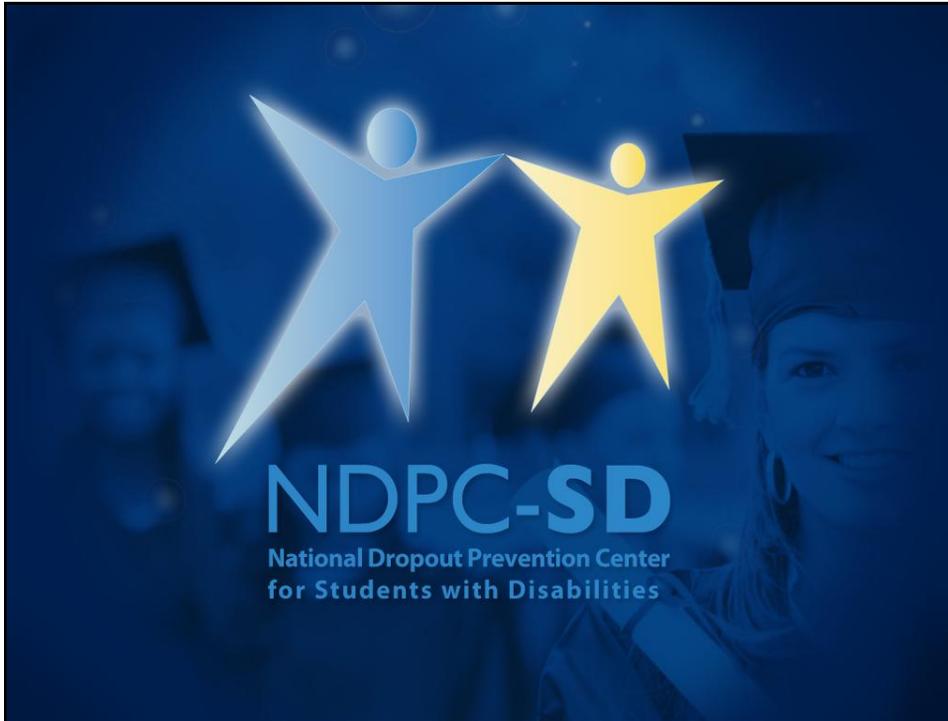
  
**National Dropout Prevention Center**  
**for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

## Effective Leadership At the Local Level

- Initiate, Support, and Maintain School Completion Initiatives
  - Recognize the Impetus for Change
  - Design & Development of an Effective Leadership Team
  - Dropout Prevention Initiative and Efforts are Vested in a Place of Authority
  - Analysis of Valid and Reliable Data / Analysis of Policies and Procedures
  - Professional Development, Training, and Technical Assistance
  - Endorsement of Evidence-Based Practices
  - Development of Early Warning Systems
  - Development of An Action Plan with Concrete and Reasonable Goals and Measures
  - Rolling Out Your Initiative
  - Parent Engagement Implementation of Action Plan
  - Community Partnerships
  - Implementation Efforts (Assess, Evaluate, Maintain, Celebrate)
  - Acquisition and Allocation of Adequate Resources (New & Existing)
  - Sustainability and Scaling-Up & Celebrating Successes!

10





**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

### School Demographics (Jefferson City High School-Jefferson City, Missouri)

- ✓ Jefferson City is the state capital
- ✓ State and federal penitentiary
- ✓ Population 39,000--- located in central Missouri
- ✓ Median household income - \$45,000
- ✓ District serves 223 square miles
- ✓ Enrollment – 2682
- ✓ White/Non-Hispanic -78%, African American -17%, Asian/Hispanic -5%
- ✓ Free & Reduced Lunch – 43.4%
- ✓ Students w/Disabilities – 12%
- ✓ Attendance rate for 2009--- 92.3%
- ✓ Graduation rate from 2001 to 2009--- 80.9%
- ✓ Number of dropout from 2001 to 2009--- 1166

12



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

### Design and Development of an Effective Leadership Team to Take Action

- ✓ District wide team – representative from High School, 9<sup>th</sup> grade Center, 2 middle schools, Nichols Career Center and Jefferson City Academic Center.
- ✓ District wide training through the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities.
- ✓ Local committees developed at each building site.
- ✓ Jefferson City High School team was composed of the following:
  - 2 counselors, 1 vocational education teacher, 3 regular education teachers, 2 special education teachers and 2 administrators.
  - High School team met weekly.

13



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

### Dropout Prevention Efforts and Initiatives are Vested in a Place of Authority

- ✓ It all starts with “LEADERSHIP”
  - Professional Learning Communities
  - Character Plus
  - Advisory
- ✓ Jefferson City High School Improvement Plan
  - GOAL - Improve School Climate
    - Objective #1---Persistence to Graduation (Academic and Behavioral Competence)
    - Objective #2---Attendance
    - Objective #3---Student Involvement (Student Engagement)

14



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

**Analysis of Valid and Reliable Data  
Analysis of Policies and Procedures**

- ✓ **District Performance Report and Aggregated Data**
  - Attendance
  - Persistence
  - Dropout Rate
  - Tardies
  - Discipline
  - Teacher Retention
  
- ✓ **Missouri School Improvement Survey**
  - Student Survey
  - Parent Survey
  - Staff Survey

15



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

**Analysis of Valid and Reliable Data  
Analysis of Policies and Procedures**

- ✓ **Professional Learning Community Survey**
  - Certified Staff Survey
  - Noncertified Staff Survey
  
- ✓ **CHARACTER Plus Implementation Survey**
  - Student Survey
  - Parent Survey
  - Staff Survey

16



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

### Professional Development, Training and Technical Assistance on Dropout Prevention

- ✓ Initial training by National Dropout Prevention Center for Student with Disabilities.
  - ✓ 3 visits (6 total days) to complete Capacity Building Training in Dropout Prevention
- ✓ Individual buildings trained leadership teams.
- ✓ County wide Character Education Initiative.
- ✓ Professional Learning Communities

**All committees number one focus is school climate – “students’ sense of belonging’**

17



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

### Endorsement of Evidence-Based Practices

- ✓ National Dropout Prevention Training
- ✓ Character plus
- ✓ Class Meeting Advisory Training
- ✓ Diversity Training (Ruby Payne)
- ✓ Professional Learning Communities
- ✓ Numerous Book Studies
- ✓ Addition of collaboration time---late starts on Tuesday and Thursday

18



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

NDPC-SD

## Development of Early Warning Systems

- ✓ Personalizing the experience for the JCHS student
  - Advisory
  - Home Visits
  - Collaboration Time
  - Late Start
  - Student Incentives
  - Student Interventions
  - Jay Plus
  - A+/Cadet Teaching
  - Zero Hour/Fifth Block Tutoring
  - Volunteer Mentors

**24---10---6---2---1**

19



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

NDPC-SD

## Development of an Action Plan with Concrete and Reasonable Goals and Measures

- ✓ Dropout Prevention Action Plan
- ✓ CHARACTER Plus Action Plan
- ✓ Building Wide School Improvement Committee

***All three joined to work from one single viable building action plan.***

20



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

### Rolling Out Your Initiative (Faculty Buy-In & Stakeholder Collaboration)

- What is the guiding coalition within Jefferson City High School?
  - ✓ Administrative Leadership
  - ✓ Departmental Leadership
  - ✓ Guiding coalition for all three main committees
- Determined the zones of influence within Jefferson City High School.
  - ✓ Zones of Influence
  - ✓ Rolled out with all staff
- Made certain we placed the right people on the bus and in the right seat.

21



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

### Parent Engagement (Home-School Partnerships)

**Developing a better plan to better personalize the experience for all families.**

- ✓ Advisory (parent contact by teacher every two weeks)
- ✓ Progress Reports (every three weeks)
- ✓ Student-Led Conferences (each semester)
- ✓ ELL Parent Meetings
- ✓ Open House
- ✓ Student-Led Conferences
- ✓ Sophomore Transition Camp

22



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

## Community Partnerships

- ✓ County Wide Character plus Initiative
- ✓ Community Partnerships
- ✓ Jefferson City Public School Foundation
- ✓ Chamber of Commerce
- ✓ Blue Ribbon Task Force
- ✓ Area Business Partners
- ✓ Lincoln University

23



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

## Implementation of Action Plan

- ✓ Administrative Long term Strategic Plan(1-3-5 Year Plan)
  - Student Achievement
  - Facilities
  - Climate/Culture
  - Communication
  - Professional Development
  - Extra/Co-Curricular Activities
  - Student Safety
  - Support Staff
- ✓ School Improvement Plan
  - Dropout Prevention Action Plan
  - Character Education Action Plan
  - Yearly Calendar

24



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

**Implementation Efforts  
(Assess, Evaluate, Maintain, Celebrate)**

- ✓ Assess Longitudinal Data
- ✓ Evaluation is Continuous and On-Going
- ✓ Continue to Maintain the Process and Program Supported by Data
- ✓ Celebrate Student and Teacher Successes

25



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

**Acquisition and Allocation of Adequate Resources  
(New and Existing)**

- ✓ District Level Budget
- ✓ County Wide Character Education Resources
- ✓ Business Partnerships

26



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

NDPC-SD

### Sustainability and Scaling-Up & Celebrating Successes!

What are our really big rocks???

- ✓ Professional Learning Communities
- ✓ Character plus
- ✓ Advisory

Successes will be celebrated throughout the building as we continue to work at improving the overall climate and culture of the building.

Goal: bring joy to the work place everyday!

## 24-10-6-2-1

27



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

NDPC-SD

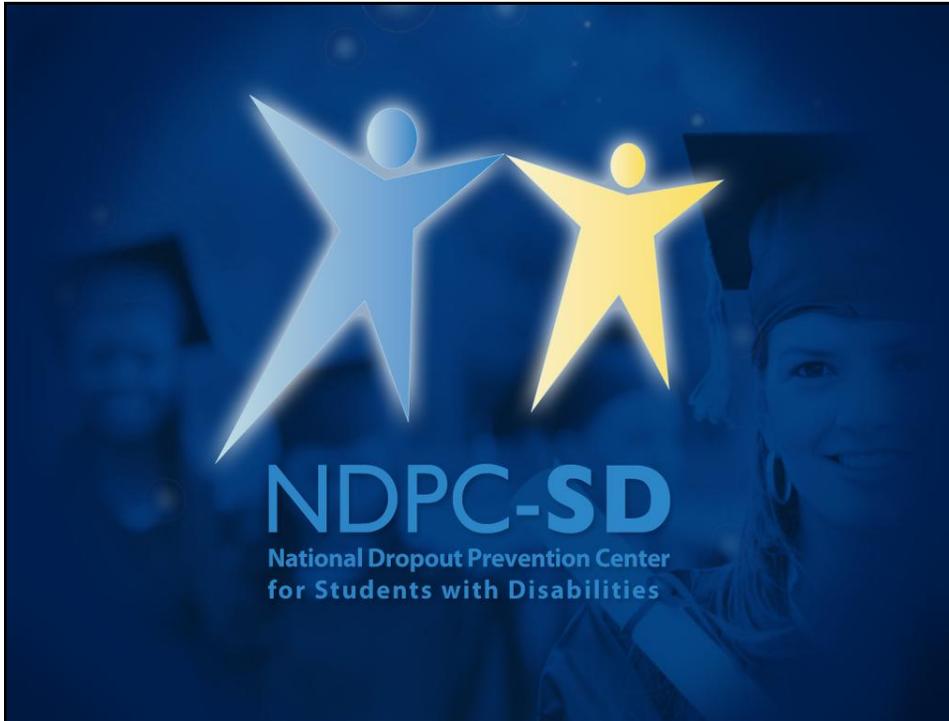
### School Climate at Jefferson City High School (Defined Based on "Our" Contextual Fit)

It's all about relationships and transformational leadership!

- ✓ 24
- ✓ 10
- ✓ 6
- ✓ 2
- ✓ 1

The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people---every student , everyday!  
(Theodore Roosevelt)

28



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

### Discussion Questions 1 and 2

- How does the assessment of teaching and learning practices; interpersonal relationships; physical, social, and emotional safety maintain a positive school climate?
- When assessed across students, educators, and parents, how do results differ?

30



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

NDPC-SD

### Discussion Question 3

- How does a positive school climate directly impact the telling indicators of success such as increased teacher retention, lower dropout rates, decreased incidences of violence, and higher student achievement?

31



National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities

NDPC-SD

# Questions

*Thank you!!*

32



**National Dropout Prevention Center  
for Students with Disabilities**

**NDPC-SD**

### Contact Information

Sandra Covington Smith  
Clemson University  
864-656-1817  
[sandras@clemson.edu](mailto:sandras@clemson.edu)

Paul Jeff Dodson  
Jefferson City High School  
573-659-3053  
[paul.dodson@jcps.k12.mo.us](mailto:paul.dodson@jcps.k12.mo.us)

Tammy Ridgeway  
Jefferson City High School  
573-632-3481  
[tammy.ridgeway@jcps.k12.mo.us](mailto:tammy.ridgeway@jcps.k12.mo.us)



U.S. Office of Special  
Education Programs



**JCPS**  
JEFFERSON CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS