



Districtwide Strategic Plan to Decrease Disengagement from Education

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

Defining Our Target Populations

Disengaged youth: Youth who have not yet completed a secondary credential but are not currently enrolled in an education program

Reengaged youth: Youth who disengaged at some point, but have since re-enrolled at an education program and are working toward a secondary credential

Youth at-risk of disengagement: Youth who have a higher likelihood of disengaging from education or are feeling less connected from education, but have not yet disengaged

Stakeholder Engagement

- Core OSSE Planning Group
 - Four virtual planning sessions
- Strategic Planning Group and Key Partner Input
 - In total, engaged with 47 organizations, agencies and schools
 - Four virtual planning sessions
 - Smaller group conversations
 - Online survey with 25 complete and 22 partial responses
- Previously Disengaged Youth, 16-24 years
 - Five focus groups with 30 youth total

Primary Research Question

What does a more coordinated, systemic approach look like for decreasing disengagement in the District and which roles do the different partners and actors play in that coordinated system?



Secondary Research Questions

Secondary Research Question One: Are there policies, accountability structures, guidance or strategies that could be amended, developed and/or implemented to better support a coordinated effort to re-engage DC's disengaged youth and support the continued engagement and persistence of

Secondary Research Question Two: What are the most common barriers to successful re-engagement or completion? What resources can be leveraged to address these barriers and why are the existing resources not accessed more often? Similarly, what are the most effective?

Secondary Research Question Three: As the District and the country recover from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, what needs will youth in the District have and what challenges will they face that are either new or more acute than before, and how can the District help mitigate these challenges during the COVID-19 recovery period?

Total Youth Disengaged

6,893*

Current number of youth between the ages of 16-24 years who are disengaged from secondary education (using the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, or ACGR, methodology)

Data caveats:

- *As of Sept. 30, 2020 (pre-pandemic calculation)
- Outcome of 98 students included in above figure unknown due to LEA data error
- Based on ACGR calculation, so does not reflect youth who may be disengaged but never enrolled within a DC LEA

Currently Educationally Disengaged, by grade at disengagement

Ninth	1,828
10th	1,169
11th	775
12th	521
Adult	119
Unknown/Missing	2,481

Grouping of Currently Educationally Disengaged, by last known school

Between 0-100 educationally disengaged students	43 high schools
Between 101-200 educationally disengaged students	Eight high schools
Between 201-300 educationally disengaged students	Six high schools
Between 301-400 educationally disengaged students	Three high schools
Between 401-500 educationally disengaged students	Three high schools
Note: These numbers are estimates based on the best data available to OSSE from LEAs; however, it must be noted that there is potential for data submission errors from the LEAs. This also includes closed schools (19 of 63 schools).	



Key Themes Identified by Stakeholders on Student Need and Barriers

Economic Demands

Whole Student Supports

Dedicated and Caring Adults

Relevant Program Options

Outreach and Awareness

Top Barriers: Disengaged Youth

N=25

CHALLENGE	INTENSITY	FREQUENCY
Need for steady work or income	4.56	4.44
Mental and physical health challenges	4.32	4.24
Lack of educational programs that are interesting or fit their needs	4.12	4.12
Lack of motivation	4.04	3.92
Lack of access to child care	4.08	3.84
Lack of stable housing	4.08	3.8
Transportation challenges	3.16	2.8

What challenges do you see **disengaged youth** facing that led to their disengagement? On a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the highest), rank each option below based on the intensity (how disruptive the challenge is for youth) and frequency (how pervasive the challenge is).

Top Barriers: Youth At-Risk of Disengagement

N=30

CHALLENGE	INTENSITY	FREQUENCY
Mental or physical health challenges	4.03	4.07
Homelessness or housing instability	4.07	3.93
Need to work or care for children while attending school	4.0	3.77
Lack of educational programs that interest the student	3.83	3.6
Lack of educational supports or accommodations in school	3.73	3.6
Lack of caring, meaningful relationships with adults in school	3.37	3.33
Incarceration	3.43	3.17
Placement into foster care	3.33	3.17
Transportation challenges	2.83	2.8

What challenges do you see **youth at-risk of disengagement** facing that lead them to disengage from education? On a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the highest), rank each option below based on the intensity (how disruptive the challenge is for youth) and frequency (how pervasive the challenge is).

Overarching Goals

1

DECREASE disengagement from education and implement student support systems that identify and support students at-risk of disengagement.

2

INCREASE Districtwide coordination, collaboration, and communication among critical stakeholders supporting reengagement.

3

AMPLIFY Districtwide advertising and marketing around reengagement efforts, graduation, and postsecondary and career paths.

Districtwide Recommendations: ReEngagement

Area of Need	Strategic Goal	Strategies	Key Partners
Outreach and Awareness	Ensure the ReEngagement Center and alternative and adult programs are widely known.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a coordinated, Districtwide marketing push sharing information about the ReEngagement Center, alternative programs, and adult programs across multiple platforms. Identify opportunities for youth to participate and lead outreach efforts. 	LEAs, adult ed CBOs, OSSE: (REC)
Whole Student Supports	Provide a deeper level of wraparound, whole student supports for re-engaging youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop/expand shared systems and informational materials as well as multi-entity partnerships to better collaborate across organizations, helping all players to understand resources and service availability/eligibility among programs. Co-locate wraparound services in school buildings, with a particular focus on housing and mental health services. Expand access to mentoring opportunities, potentially including peer or near-peer mentoring, for youth choosing to re-engage. 	LEAs, adult ed CBOs, OSSE: (REC/H&W/K12), DME, DHS, CBOs
Economic Demands	Ensure that youth know about and can access existing opportunities to earn a living wage while completing a secondary credential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore ways to further promote existing opportunities to earn money while attending school. Analyze whether existing earn-and-learn and work-based learning opportunities meet youth's needs. 	LEAs, adult ed CBOs, DOES, DHS, OSSE: (CTE/DAR)
Economic Demands	Reduce the potential conflict between earning a degree or credential and needing to work by establishing appropriate flexibilities in how and when re-engaging youth attend school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure programmatic options include a diversity of options for attending – including synchronous, asynchronous, daytime and evening options as well as competency-based options that aren't directly connected to seat-time requirements. 	LEAs, adult ed CBOs, OSSE, possibly DME, PCSB



Districtwide Recommendations: Prevention

Area of Need	Strategic Goal	Strategies	Key Partners
Whole Student Supports	Build systems and structures so that youth at risk of disengaging get rapid and comprehensive supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with LEAs to help them pro-actively use student data to allow for earlier identification of youth with disengagement warning factors for the sole purpose of offering additional and targeted student supports. Co-locate wraparound services in school buildings, with a particular focus on housing and mental health services. 	LEAs, OSSE: (REC/H&W/K12/DAR/CIO), DME, DHS, CBOs
Dedicated and Caring Adults	Ensure that every student has an adult that knows them and is a caring, trusted relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand access to mentoring opportunities particularly for at-risk students, potentially including peer or near-peer mentoring. Invest in a major expansion of multiple, trained SEL professionals in every school (with a focus on schools with high numbers of at-risk students and/or track records of high disengagement) to better respond to student mental health and non-academic support needs. 	LEAs, OSSE: (H&W/K12)
Relevant Program Options	Provide additional work-based learning and other career-linked learning opportunities that feel exciting, motivating, and relevant to youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand educational pathways to a high school diploma that incorporate work-based learning, apprenticeships, CTE and/or individualized, portfolio opportunities as part of the requirements to complete a secondary credential. 	LEAs, OSSE: (K12/CTE), DME, SBOE, PCSB
Relevant Program Options	Balance rigorous graduation timelines and federal policy requirements with appropriate flexibility for youth facing specific barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider any flexibilities possible for students who may need to complete their degree on a longer time schedule, particularly for students new to the United States. 	LEAs, OSSE: (K12), PCSB



OSSE and REC-Led Strategies

Area of Need	Strategic Goal	Strategies	Key Partners
Outreach and Awareness	Ensure the ReEngagement Center and alternative and adult programs are widely known.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a Districtwide marketing effort to share about the ReEngagement Center, including on social media and via key partners. Identify opportunities for youth to participate and lead outreach efforts. Continue and expand efforts to share critical reengagement information (quarterly roundtables with key stakeholders, ongoing youth engagement events such as REC Live, ongoing resource workshops). 	OSSE: (REC/Coms), LEAs, adult ed CBOs
Outreach and Awareness	Develop and implement a plan to make sure stakeholders are aware of the final strategic plan and the recommendations are implemented with fidelity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with middle schools, high schools and community partners to share specifics about the strategic plan. Facilitate a Districtwide consortium focused on decreasing disengagement comprised of key District agencies, school representatives and community partners that are associated with strategies outlined in this plan. 	OSSE: (REC/H&W/K12/DAR), LEAs, adult ed CBOs, DME, DHS, DOES, DBH, DYRS, CBOs
Whole Student Supports, Relevant Program Options	Serve as a central point for organizations and agencies that support disengaged youth to be well-connected and understand the services each other provide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through a community of practice, facilitate knowledge sharing to actively connect schools, LEAs, agencies and organizations supporting youth. Develop guidance documents that identify replicable best and promising practices and partnerships from national and local research. 	OSSE: (REC/H&W/K12/DAR), LEAs, adult ed CBOs, DME, DHS, DOES, DBH, DYRS, CBOs
Whole Student Supports, Relevant Program Options	Facilitate organizations and agencies to better understand and serve target youth by more regularly sharing data about youth pathways, barriers and types of programmatic options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually share data and information with partners about disengaged youth and youth at-risk of disengagement. Collect and share information from and among LEAs about the number of youth pursuing flexible programming options and specific barrier mitigation services to inform the District about any observed trends. 	OSSE: (REC/DAR), LEAs



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