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Regional Staff Development Day, Oct. 22nd

On October 22nd, close to 900 teachers and support staff from six school districts attended 54 professional development offerings! This year many of the sessions provided allowed teachers in specific curriculum areas to meet with their colleagues in other districts. They were able to research, collaborate and share best practices. Examples of sessions offered included: *Special Education Service Delivery: Research-Based Strategies for Resource Room and Consultant Teachers*, *Elementary Science Program: Resources for Science, ELA, and Math Integration*, *Using the SMARTBoard in the Mathematics Classroom*, *Network: Literacy Centers K-6*, and *Network: Creative Uses of Government Commodity Food in Educational Programs*. Along with these in-school sessions, teachers were given resources on using their environmental and natural surroundings within the classroom by partaking in the Adirondack High Peaks Ecology and the Malone Area Geology Field Trips.

“Networking is great—very useful.”

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Dropout Intervention & Prevention

Increasing the number of students who graduate with a high school diploma as well as decreasing the drop-out rate are two federal, state, and local initiatives. When the drop-out related research is examined, the following overall trends have been found:

- Dropping out of school is related to a variety of factors that can be classified in four areas or domains: individual, family, school, and community factors.
- There is no single risk factor that can be used to accurately predict who is at risk of dropping out.
- The accuracy of dropout predictions increases when combinations of multiple risk factors are considered.
- Dropouts are not a homogeneous group. Many subgroups of students can be identified based on when risk factors emerge, the combinations of risk factors experienced, and how the factors influence them.
- Students who drop out often cite factors across multiple domains and there are complex interactions among risk factors.
- Dropping out of school is often the result of a long process of disengagement that may begin before a child enters school.
- Dropping out is often described as a process, not an event, with factors building and compounding over time.

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Specific drop-out related variables for students enrolled in middle and high school that are measureable include, but are not limited to the following:

- Absent more than 10 days
- Participate in few or no school activities
- Dislike school
- Failed 3–5 classes
- Retained one or more years
- Received 5–9 disciplinary referrals
- Identified in MS for lack of academic progress

Two districts within the Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES region are currently piloting drop-out prevention projects for middle and high school students with disabilities. Both Saranac Lake and Salmon River school districts have initiated Recommendation #1, as recommended by the National Drop-out Prevention Center (<http://www.dropoutprevention.org/>):

Recommendation 1: Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individuals at risk of dropping out.

Each district has created data collection systems that are reflective of the variables listed above. Because the accuracy of predicting drop-outs increases with combinations of multiple risk factors, the risk factors present for each student are tallied to assist in determining which students may be at risk of dropping out.

Once students with disabilities at-risk of dropping out have been identified, each district will create individualized intervention plans, taking into consideration Recommendations 2 through 6 below and specifically targeting each student's identified at-risk factors:

- **Recommendation 2:** Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out.
- **Recommendation 3:** Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.
- **Recommendation 4:** Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills.
- **Recommendation 5:** Personalize the learning environment and instructional process.
- **Recommendation 6:** 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.

For sustainability purposes, each district is exploring the use of the IEP process to not only embed drop-out prevention related supports, but as a progress monitoring tool to ensure students don't fall within the cracks.



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