



Missouri Dropout Prevention Summit Questions and Answers



Why should my school and community participate?

The dropout issue affects everyone. The vast majority of students who leave high school before graduating negatively impact their own economic future and that of their community with lost income and opportunity. Low educational attainment also impacts health care costs, crime and poverty. A coordinated local, regional and statewide effort involving multiple partners can initiate planning and provide a jump-start to address this issue.

Why a summit?

Nationally, every 26 seconds a student drops out of high school in America. That adds up to more than 1.1 million students per year. In the 2007-2008 school year, Missouri had 11,234 students in grades 9-12 who dropped out of school. For those young people who do not graduate from high school, future prospects are dim. For those who do graduate, far too many are not prepared for college and work.

The America's Promise Alliance is supporting 50 states and more than 50 city Dropout Prevention Summits to be held by 2010. These summits will increase awareness, encourage collaboration and facilitate action in those states and communities that want to improve their graduation rates. America's Promise Alliance invited every governor to host a statewide summit. In addition, the organization invited 55 mayors and superintendents to host separate city-level summits.

Why was our district identified?

District data submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was used to identify school districts with dropout rates greater than four percent. Why four percent? The Department's long-term goal has been to reduce the dropout rate to three percent. While some district dropout rates are less than four percent, they have high numbers of dropouts. The typical class size in Missouri is 18. Districts with more than 18 dropouts were then included. Exceptions were made in both cases to accommodate the capacity of each participating site.

How do we identify who is on our team?

The Department encourages a team be composed of the following types of individuals within the community:

Schools: School board members, superintendents, principals, administrators, teachers or other personnel who work with at-risk students and dropouts.

Businesses: Employers and business associations in the community. This might include employers that have expressed interest in dropouts or workforce issues. In addition to specific employers, this could include local chambers of commerce and workforce investment board members.

Community Organizations: Community organizations such as United Way, Boys and Girls Club, Optimist, Rotary or other organizations that are interested in their community and in youth development.

Political Leaders: This could include local elected officials at the state, county and city level.

Students: Students who are identified as at-risk or dropouts are empowered to find solutions to problems and offer insight into this issue. This could include students from district at-risk programs, dropout programs, Adult Education and Literacy programs or participants in local Workforce Investment Act youth programs.

Other Community Stakeholders: Representatives of the legal system including the sheriff, police, local juvenile authorities and mental health and social service representatives.

Note: The meeting space available at each of the 20 regional sites may limit the number of individuals who can participate that day. Where space is limited, the Department urges each region to include key representatives from each of the groups identified above for the summit, then plan to engage the broader team as part of the follow-up action plan.

What will the team do?

Following each of the morning and afternoon keynote sessions, facilitators at the local sites will lead a discussion to identify state and local issues and to begin dialoging on a local basis with your own team, as well as on a regional basis with other teams. There will also be discussions on how to identify strategies and actions that can be implemented to address the dropout issue.

How can we prepare for the summit?

Planning materials will be posted on the Dropout Prevention section of the DESE Web site (www.dese.mo.gov/dropoutprevention). These materials will also be sent to each superintendent. Schools can share their own dropout data, as well as local planning information, with team members. The Dropout Prevention Web site also has many resources and Web links that can provide you with additional information.

Who can we contact with our questions?

For additional information, contact Erika Brandl, Supervisor in Community Education, at (573) 526-5395 or by e-mail at erika.brandl@dese.mo.gov.