



ATTENDANCE

GPA

Evidence in Action

A K20 Center Research Brief

Comprehensive CCGC Evidence in Action Brief

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Introduction

This intervention brief explores the research article titled "Factors that Promote High School Graduation: A Review of the Literature" by Jonathan F. Zaff, Alice Donlan, Aaron Gunning, Sara E. Anderson, Elana McDermott, and Michelle Sedaca, published in 2016. The article examines the factors that promote high school graduation, focusing on assets rather than risk factors. The literature reviewed highlights the importance of understanding what helps students graduate, especially given the significant economic, social, and civic benefits of high school completion. The authors emphasize the need for a positive youth development (PYD) framework to identify and promote these assets across individual, family, peer, school, and community contexts.

Methodology

Research Design:

The study employs a systematic review of longitudinal, US-based studies from the past 25 years, focusing on malleable factors that predict high school graduation. The review is framed by Ecological Systems Theories and the PYD perspective, examining factors across multiple contexts and levels of a young person's ecology.

Sample:

The sample includes 41 studies that met the criteria of being longitudinal, US-based, focusing on direct predictors of high school graduation or continued enrollment. The studies cover various contexts, including individual, family, peer, school, and community factors.

Data Analysis:

The authors conducted a systematic search using online scholarly databases and refined the results based on criteria such as direct predictors, longitudinal design, domestic focus, and recent publication dates. They identified 12 assets that predict high school graduation and continued enrollment, supported by at least three different studies from multiple data sources.

Results

The study identifies 12 key assets that promote high school graduation:

1. **Individual-Level Factors:**



- **Intrinsic Motivation:** Students who find tasks inherently interesting or enjoyable are more likely to graduate.
 - **School Engagement:** Behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in school predicts graduation.
 - **Youth Expectations for Academic Attainment:** High expectations for academic success increase the likelihood of graduation.
 - **Locus of Control:** Belief in one's control over academic outcomes promotes persistence and graduation.
- 2. Family-Level Factors:**
- **Parental Academic Involvement:** Parents' involvement in educational activities at home and school supports graduation.
 - **Parent-Child Connection:** Regular communication and emotional support from parents predict continued enrollment and graduation.
- 3. Peer-Level Factors:**
- **Positive Peer Norms:** Having friends who value academic achievement increases the likelihood of graduation.
- 4. School-Level Factors:**
- **Positive Student-Teacher Relationships:** Supportive and respectful relationships with teachers promote graduation.
 - **School-Sponsored Extracurricular Activities:** Participation in extracurricular activities fosters school attachment and graduation.
 - **Small Schools:** Smaller school sizes encourage closer connections and higher graduation rates.
 - **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** CTE courses and career academies support continued enrollment and graduation.
- 5. Community-Level Factors:**
- **Community-Based Out-of-School Time (OST) Programs:** Structured, adult-led activities outside of school hours promote graduation among disadvantaged youth.

Implications:

The findings suggest that promoting these assets can help increase high school graduation rates. The study highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach that integrates these factors within school and community strategies to create supportive environments for students.



Application into Practice

To replicate the intervention at another school, the following steps can be taken:

1. **Develop a Comprehensive Support System:** Implement a community schools approach or comprehensive community initiatives to provide an array of supportive programs and practices.
2. **Promote Individual Strengths:** Implement programs that enhance intrinsic motivation, school engagement, and locus of control, such as social and emotional learning programs.
3. **Engage Parents:** Foster parental involvement through school events, parent-teacher conferences, and communication strategies that build strong parent-child connections.
4. **Leverage Teacher and Peer Support:** Train teachers to support students' emotional and academic needs and create positive peer norms through peer mentoring programs.
5. **Enhance School and Community Programs:** Strengthen school-based extracurricular activities, create small school environments, and offer CTE courses. Additionally, support community-based OST programs to provide academic enrichment and social-emotional learning opportunities.

Work Cited

Zaff, J. F., Donlan, A., Gunning, A., Anderson, S. E., McDermott, E., & Sedaca, M. (2016). Factors that promote high school graduation: A review of the literature. *Educational Psychology Review*, 29(3), 447-476.