



MMP Recommendations for Dropout Prevention and Recovery Policy: The Need for Wraparound Social Emotional Supports in Schools

Mass Mentoring Partnership (MMP) is working to influence policy around the evidenced need for greater social-emotional support in schools as a remedy to high dropout rates. We see graduation coaches as the solution to this prevalent issue, as a constant presence within the school building that can mentor at-risk youth and provide wraparound supports. During the course of the last year, MMP has collected peer to peer data from high school students in the Boston Public School System to support this advocacy effort and public awareness campaign in two ways: through a survey and holding focus groups. MMP has used that data to come up with recommendations for dropout prevention measures in respect to bills H.2056 and S.222, An Act Relative to Dropout Prevention and Recovery.

Dropout Prevention

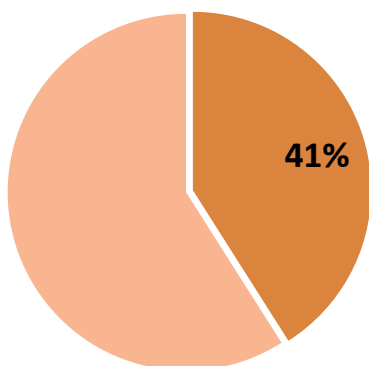
Mass Mentoring Partnership understands the significant positive impacts of mentoring on two early indicators of high school drop-out, these being high levels of absenteeism and recurring behavior problems in school. Graduation coaches add an additional layer of social and emotional support that is integral to the wellbeing of students across our state. For example, in the U.S. only 56 percent of students who have dropped out report that there was a school staff person they could go to about school problems. Youth in developmental relationships are less likely to skip school, present better attitudes and behaviors at school, and are more likely to attend college than their peers.

In the 2015-16 school year over 5,500 students in Massachusetts left school before earning a diploma. ⁱ Dropouts are:

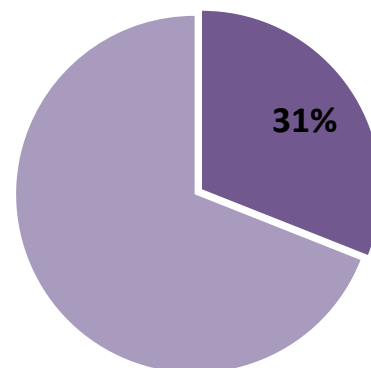
- less likely to have a job and those who do earn less, on average, than high school graduates,
- less likely to have health insurance, and are more likely to depend on Medicaid or Medicare for their coverage,
- more likely to depend on public assistance, and
- are more likely to be incarceratedⁱⁱ

Findings from our Data Collection

Mass Mentoring Partnership created a survey targeting Boston high school aged students that calls to question what, if any, caring relationships they have with adults in their school building. **MMP has since collected 270+ responses:**



■ Students feel like they have no one in their schools to talk about the challenges in their home or community.



■ Students feel like they have no one to talk to about challenges in the classroom

We also conducted focus groups with these students for alternative data collection. The responses were very revealing:



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"I know a few people who thought of dropping out because they didn't have a good support system. I know their home life wasn't exactly the best and school was just an added pressure and they didn't get the needed help from school like the guidance counselors or the teachers and if you mix all that it's a bad situation."

MMP's Policy Recommendations

- In addition to the early warning indicators used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, a social emotional assessment tool shall be used to determine if any adverse events or factors present a negative effect on a youth's academic and social success.
- The department of elementary and secondary education shall develop and administer a 3-year targeted program for dropout prevention and recovery in schools with annual dropout rates at or greater than 5%. The program shall be a competitive grant process for school districts or local community agencies serving students who attend these schools.
- *The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall require graduation coaches be placed in public middle and high schools with a 5% dropout rate or higher.*
 - Schools can utilize financial resources to hire graduation coaches who meet employment qualifications equal to or greater than minimum to a Bachelor's Degree in education, counseling or other related fields such as social work.
 - Schools with a 5% dropout rate or higher can provide professional development trainings to adults currently working in the school building to serve as coaches. These adults can be teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, or other professionals present in the facility, and can include school-based mentors from an accredited mentoring program. The coach shall be qualified based on having past experiences working effectively with youth.
- Schools can leverage resources and the assistance of community-based organizations to serve as graduation coaches, working successfully in the field of dropout intervention and recovery, and building healthy sustaining relationships, such as mentoring, with at-risk youth.
- All school personnel shall be provided with professional development opportunities and administrative technical support services. Adults serving in this role shall be trained in trauma-informed practices, cultural responsiveness, effective strategies for parent and guardian engagement, and creating and sustaining healthy youth-adult relationships within in a school setting. Schools may partner together to provide professional development opportunities and administrative and technical support services.

About Mass Mentoring Partnership

Mass Mentoring Partnership (MMP) is fueling the movement to expand empowering youth-adult relationships across Massachusetts. MMP serves more than 270 programs statewide supporting over 33,000 youth in quality relationships. We work with mentoring programs and youth development organizations to assess programmatic needs and organizational capacity to provide customized strategies that strengthen youth, families, and communities.

For questions, contact Chelsea Aquino, Manager of Government Relations: caquino@massmentors.org

ⁱHigh School Dropouts 2015-16, Massachusetts Public Schools

ⁱⁱ *Social and Fiscal Consequences of the Dropout Crisis*. (Updated, 2009). Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.