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Institute on Disability Program Reduces Dropout Rates at N.H. Schools

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DURHAM, N.H. – 10 New Hampshire high schools that partnered with a project of the Institute on Disability (IOD) at the University of New Hampshire significantly reduced their student dropout rates.

The IOD’s Achievement in Dropout Prevention and Excellence (APEX II) project worked with 10 high schools that had higher-than-average dropout rates. Between 2005 and 2009, APEX II project staff implemented a systemic, data-driven behavioral support and improvement process called Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in these schools, resulting in an aggregate average annual dropout rate of 2.52 percent in these schools in 2008-09, down from 6.2 percent in 2004-05. One school, Somersworth High School, saw its dropout rate fall by nearly six full percentage points.

“For many of the schools, we believe that the PBIS system contributed to their successes by introducing how data can drive decision-making and a process for examining and revising their discipline systems, along with comprehensive training provided by the project,” says APEX project director JoAnne Malloy.

Decline in dropout rates between 2004-05 and 2008-09 at APEX II schools were as follows:

- Berlin High School: 5.6% to 3.3%
- Kennett High School (North Conway): 5.6% to 1.1%
- Manchester Central High School: 9.2% to 3.9%
- Manchester Memorial High School: 6% to 2.7%
- Nashua North High School: 4.7% to 1.7%
- Nashua South High School: 4.7% to 1.6%
- Raymond High School: 6.1% to 4.2%
- Somersworth High School: 8% to 2.1%
- Spaulding High School (Rochester): 6.4% to 3%
- Woodsville High School: 6.5% to 1.6%

APEX II was funded by the U.S. Department of Education and directed by the New Hampshire Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education. Along with the IOD, project partners included the New Hampshire Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Supports (NH CEBIS), the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University, and Main Street Academix at New England College.

Because of the extensive and proven success of the APEX II grant, the IOD has been awarded a third APEX grant for an additional two years. APEX III will feature continued school-to-career and behavior support services for at-risk students, as well as statewide training opportunities and a fifth-annual APEX Summer Leadership Institute to be held in August 2010.

For more information on the APEX project, visit www.iod.unh.edu.

The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire was established in 1987 to provide a coherent university-based focus for the improvement of knowledge, policies, and practices related to the lives of persons with disabilities and their families. Its mission is to advance policies and systems changes, promising practices, education, and research that strengthen communities to ensure full access, equal opportunities, and participation for all persons.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a New England liberal arts college and a major research university with a strong focus on undergraduate-oriented research. A land, sea and space-grant university, UNH is the state’s flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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