

Vance County Schools



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The dropout rate in Vance County Schools for 2014-2015 declined for the sixth consecutive year with data from the N.C. Department of Public Instruction indicating that 68 students or 2.28 percent left school early.

The 2014-2015 rate was a decrease from 83 students or 2.71 percent dropping out in 2013-2014.

In 2012, Vance County Schools implemented "Destination Graduation" one of the National Dropout Prevention Network Center's model program that addresses prevention, intervention and recovery. The program highly emphasizes parent participation, community involvement and student recognition for behavior and academic success. Having an eye on the data and focusing on trends have given the district an advantage, according to Dr. Ralphel Holloman, Sr., dropout prevention specialist, and Dr. Cindy Bennett, assistant superintendent for Student Services.

The district did experience a slight increase in the number of short-term suspensions for students in 2014-2015. While most student code of conduct violations are lesser offenses, when students have second and third violations, this causes the number of short-term suspensions to increase, Holloman and Bennett noted.

"In order to keep students in the educational process, we are focusing on more options for students that will engage them in better decision making," they said. "Many schools are using Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). Support is given to teachers via behavior support specialists in the form of strategies that will de-escalate and redirect actions of students in the classroom. Should there be a need for other options, ISS, or In-School Suspension, is an attempt to get those students who have violated some behavior rule time to rethink their actions and regroup before returning to class. It is our goal to keep all students in class all of the time; however, we cannot allow the educational process to be diminished, so there are times when suspensions are necessary."

Steps being taken to stop the number of reportable crimes in our schools involve using data to show early warning signs of students at risk of being suspended due to incidents already accruing in the fourth and fifth grades. These indicators will enable the district to implement effective strategies to address these issues. The PBIS programs in schools are also factors to decrease reportable crimes. Enhancing parent and community engagement in our schools also will help. Implementation of research based programs that address the risk factors allows students to find a way to manage their tempers, attitudes and behaviors as they transition through the program. The school system also is working with the Vance County Sheriff's Department to implement a School Resource Officers program in which officers are trained to work with students, build relationships and focus on accountability and responsibility for their actions.

The school system uses the data in the state's annual report on school dropouts and crime and violence to determine how some students may not be completely engaged in the educational process. The schools are working with social workers, counselors and nurses to collaborate and identify students with at-risk factors that may be displayed in inappropriate behaviors and begin early intervention and identification of systems of support for these students, Holloman and Bennett added.

The school system also is currently developing systems of support for elementary, middle and enhancing high school supports for students in order to get them on track academically and behaviorally.

"Vance County Schools has recognized that if we want different results, we have to do something different," Holloman and Bennett said. "Doing something different means careful and deliberate steps to analysis of data, identification of root causes, then strategically developing a plan for changing the trajectory to one that will lead to success for all children. We are addressing prevention and intervention strategies, so that we are ahead of the curve with a goal of offering the best possible education to all students."