

Implementation Rubric: Using Early Warning Systems to Identify and Support Students at Risk of Dropping Out of High School

Purpose and Background

Information gathered during this process is intended to be used formatively by school teams and to help plan future efforts to identify and support students at risk of dropping out of high school. Early warning systems (EWS) refer to data systems or screening practices that use validated indicators for the early identification of students who are at risk of missing key educational milestones or meeting specific academic goals or outcomes (e.g., high school graduation, college readiness). States, districts, school leaders, and staff use validated indicators based on readily available data (drawn from national research or locally validated) to highlight students who may be at risk and to provide information to inform educators' practices and guide students back on track. This *Implementation Rubric* and companion *Implementation Interview: Using Early Warning Systems to Identify and Support Students at Risk of Dropping Out of High School* focus on the use of EWS as a means of identifying students at risk of not graduating from high school.

In North Carolina, the At Risk Report and Diploma Assessment Report available in PowerSchool provides North Carolina schools and districts the capacity to design early warning reports. As a result, PowerSchool and the report users can consider those resources when thinking about EWS within this document. To learn more about these reports, please visit <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/dropout/warning/>.

While the terminology used for this process may vary, within this document, EWS implementation is defined as the a cycle of (a) using EWS data and other data to identify students at risk of dropping out of school and to develop a hypothesis for the underlying root cause; (b) identifying and matching interventions and supports to address schoolwide needs, the needs of groups of students, or the needs of individual students; (c) monitoring student progress and making adaptations to interventions and supports as needed; and (d) continuously reviewing and refining the implementation cycle to ensure that it is successfully supporting students. One example of an EWS implementation framework is the Early Warning Intervention Monitoring System Implement Cycle (EWIMS) developed by American Institutes for Research through the work of the National High School Center. For more information on EWIMS, please visit www.earlywarningsystems.org/resources-tools/implementation-and-research.

To learn more about EWS, please visit www.earlywarningsystems.org/.

Structure

The rubric is based on the structure of the Center on Response to Intervention’s Integrity Rubric (see www.rti4success.org). The rubric comprises seven sections that reflect key aspects of the EWS implementation cycle, as follows:

1. **System Features to Support Readiness and Implementation.** Resources and organizational structures necessary to support, identify, and intervene to support students at risk of dropping out of high school
2. **Data Team and Structure.** Team structure and process in place to review EWS data and other data in order to assign and monitor interventions
3. **EWS Tool Capabilities.** Components and capabilities of the tool (e.g., indicators and thresholds, reports) and maintenance of the tool to support identification of students at risk of dropping out
4. **Review of EWS Data.** Data review process to identify at-risk students, groups of students, or schoolwide patterns, and to explore underlying root causes of risk and develop a hypothesis for intervention and support
5. **Interventions and Supports.** Interventions and supports of varying focus (e.g., attendance, course performance, behavior) and intensity—aligned to address identified root causes of risk—provided to support dropout prevention efforts
6. **Progress Monitoring.** Ongoing and frequent monitoring of student progress across levels of interventions to monitor responsiveness to interventions and supports, and to make adjustments and adaptations as needed
7. **Continuous Improvement.** System for collecting and analyzing data to measure fidelity and effectiveness of EWS implementation

Each section of the *Implementation Rubric* includes specific items reflecting key pieces of implementation and a 5-point rating scale and descriptions of practices for *Little or no implementation*, *Partial or inconsistent implementation*, or *Complete and consistent implementation*.

Use and Scoring

The Implementation Rubric provides a 5-point rating scale and descriptions of practices that would score a 1, 3, or 5 for each item. Interviewers (or teams conducting a self-assessment) may also assign the school a rating of 2 or 4 if the information collected suggests the school falls between the rubric descriptions. For example, if the school is performing at a level higher than the rubric describes for a 3 rating but not quite at the level described for a 5, the rating should be a 4 for that item. Information gathered during this process is intended to be used formatively by school teams and to help plan future support efforts. The rubric is accompanied by an interview document, *Implementation Interview: Using Early Warning Systems to Identify and Support Students at Risk of Dropping Out of High*

School, which may be used for self-assessment or structured interview of a school’s leadership or data team. The goal of the *Implementation Interview* is to create an open dialogue about EWS implementation. The rubric and interview are not intended as a personal evaluation; rather, they can inform the identification of implementation strengths, detect barriers that teams have encountered, and identify areas in need of additional focus or professional development.

Description of Measures	1 = (Little or no implementation)	3 = (Partial or inconsistent implementation)	5 = (Complete and consistent implementation)
1. System Features to Support Readiness and Implementation: Resources and organizational structures necessary to support, identify, and intervene to support students at risk of dropping out of high school			
Leadership	Decisions and actions by school and district leaders limit the feasibility or effectiveness of using EWS data to support dropout prevention efforts; there is a lack of leadership support for the use of EWS.	Decisions and actions by school and/or district leaders are inconsistent and only somewhat supportive of using EWS data to support dropout prevention efforts; support for the use of EWS is somewhat evident.	Decisions and actions by school and district leaders proactively support using EWS data to support dropout prevention efforts; there is leadership support for the use of EWS.
Resources	Resources (e.g., funds, programs, time available) are not allocated or monitored to support EWS implementation including data review, interventions, and monitoring.	Resources (e.g., funds, programs, time available) are partially allocated and monitored to support EWS implementation including data review, interventions, and monitoring.	Resources (e.g., funds, programs, time available) are adequately allocated and continuously monitored to support EWS implementation including data review, interventions, and monitoring.
Communications With and Involvement of Families and Students	No conditions are met: a. A description of EWS and how it is being used to support dropout prevention is shared with families. b. A coherent process is used to update families on the progress of their child. c. Families and students are involved during decision making regarding supports and interventions to help students stay in school and graduate.	At least one condition is met: a. A description of EWS and how it is being used to support dropout prevention is shared with families. b. A coherent process is used to update families on the progress of their child. c. Families and students are involved during decision making regarding supports and interventions to help students stay in school and graduate.	All conditions are met: a. A description of EWS and how it is being used to support dropout prevention is shared with families. b. A coherent process is used to update families on the progress of their child. c. Families and students are involved during decision making regarding supports and interventions to help students stay in school and graduate.

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Communication With and Involvement of Staff	<p>No conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A description of the school’s use of EWS to support dropout prevention is shared with staff. b. A system is in place to keep staff informed about student progress. c. Staff collaborate frequently to support students at risk of dropping out. 	<p>At least one condition is met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A description of the school’s use of EWS to support dropout prevention is shared with staff. b. A system is in place to keep staff informed about student progress. c. Staff collaborate frequently to support students at risk of dropping out. 	<p>All conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A description of the school’s use of EWS to support dropout prevention is shared with staff. b. A system is in place to keep staff informed about student progress. c. Staff collaborate frequently to support students at risk of dropping out.
Professional Development	<p>The school has no well-defined, school-based professional development mechanism to support continuous improvement of data-based decision making and delivery of interventions as a means for preventing students from dropping out of high school.</p>	<p>Some forms of school-based professional development are available, but most are not consistent or job embedded to ensure continuous improvement of data-based decision making and delivery of interventions as a means for preventing students from dropping out of high school.</p>	<p>School-based professional development is institutionalized and structured so that all teachers continuously examine, reflect upon, and improve data-based decision making and delivery of interventions as a means for preventing students from dropping out of high school.</p>
Community Partnerships	<p>No partnerships with community-based organizations are in place.</p>	<p>Partnerships with community-based organizations are in development to supplement services provided within the school, and/or some partnerships are in place but they do not cover the range of student needs identified by EWS data and other data sources.</p>	<p>Partnerships with community-based organizations are in place to supplement services provided within the school and address the range of student needs identified by EWS data and other data sources.</p>

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2. Data Team and Structure: Team structure and process in place to review EWS data and other data in order to assign and monitor interventions			
Team or Appropriate Support Mechanism	There is no evidence that a team composed of staff with various areas of expertise and knowledge of students in the school has been formed to support the review of EWS data and intervention selection and monitoring.	There is partial evidence that the following occur: a. A team composed of staff with various areas of expertise and knowledge of students in the school has been formed to support the review of EWS data and intervention selection and monitoring. b. Team members have clear understandings of their roles and responsibilities. c. Additional staff, family members, and/or community members are invited to participate on the team as relevant.	All of the following consistently occur: a. A team composed of staff with various areas of expertise including technical knowledge of the EWS, diverse knowledge of students in the school, and decision-making authority has been formed to support the review of EWS data and intervention selection and monitoring. b. Team members have clear understandings of their roles and responsibilities. c. Additional staff, family members, and/or community members are invited to participate on the team as relevant.
Regular Meetings	There is no evidence of a meeting schedule for the EWS team.	There is partial evidence of a meeting schedule for the EWS team, but meetings are inconsistent or lack routines and agendas to facilitate meetings.	There is evidence of both a regular meeting schedule, at least three times per year, for the EWS team or appropriate support mechanism and established routines and agendas to facilitate meetings.

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3. EWS Tool Capabilities: Components and capabilities of the tool (e.g., indicators and thresholds, reports) and maintenance of the tool to support identification of students at risk of dropping out			
EWS Indicators and Thresholds¹	There is insufficient evidence that the EWS indicators and thresholds have been validated for predicting high school graduation by research or data analysis.	Some evidence indicates that the EWS indicators and thresholds have been validated for predicting high school graduation by research or data analysis, but staff involved in EWS implementation are unable to articulate the supporting evidence.	Evidence indicates that the EWS indicators and thresholds have been validated for predicting high school graduation by research or data analysis, and staff involved in EWS implementation are able to articulate the supporting evidence.
EWS Tool Capabilities	One or none of the following conditions is met: a. The EWS tool includes all students (i.e., is universal). b. The EWS tool allows students to be grouped and sorted. c. The tool allows users to track and monitor student risk status throughout the school year. d. Reports are available to provide multiple ways of examining student-level and school-level information (i.e., groups of students, schoolwide).	Two of the following conditions are met: a. The EWS tool includes all students (i.e., is universal). b. The EWS tool allows students to be grouped and sorted. c. The tool allows users to track and monitor student risk status throughout the school year. d. Reports are available to provide multiple ways of examining student-level and school-level information (i.e., groups of students, schoolwide).	All of the following conditions are met: a. The EWS tool includes all students (i.e., is universal). b. The EWS tool allows students to be grouped and sorted. c. The tool allows users to track and monitor student risk status throughout the school year. d. Interventions are incorporated. e. Reports are available to provide multiple ways of examining student-level and school-level information (i.e., groups of students, schoolwide).
EWS Tool Maintenance	There is not an established process to ensure that data are accurately imported/entered and updated more than once a year.	There is a partially established process to ensure that data are accurately imported/entered and updated more than once a year.	There is a well-established process to ensure data are accurately imported/entered and updated more than twice a year.

¹ **Indicators** capture students’ academic performance, behavior, and engagement. They are based on readily available data such as course performance, credits

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EWS Tool Support	No team members are knowledgeable about the EWS tool, its technical capabilities, and the importing and maintenance of data incorporated within the tool.	At least one team member is knowledgeable about the EWS tool, its technical capabilities, and the importing and maintenance of data incorporated within the tool.	Team members are knowledgeable about the tool, its technical capabilities, the importing and maintenance of data incorporated within the tool, and there is a process to teach new team members.
4. Review of EWS Data: <i>Data review process to identify at-risk students, groups of students, or schoolwide patterns, and to explore underlying root causes of risk and develop a hypothesis for intervention and support</i>			
EWS Data Review	No or limited review of EWS data is conducted.	A partial review of EWS data is undertaken which may include at least two of the following actions: a. Review students identified as at risk for any indicator. b. Identify student risk patterns over time. c. Identify patterns for groups of students with similar risk factors over time. d. Identify school-level patterns over time. e. Disaggregate data based on specific subgroups of students (e.g., English language learners, students with disabilities, migrant students, Native American/Alaskan Native students).	A comprehensive review of the EWS data is undertaken which includes all of the following actions: a. Review students identified as at risk for any indicator. b. Identify student risk patterns over time. c. Identify patterns for groups of students with similar risk factors over time. d. Identify school-level patterns over time. e. over time. f. Disaggregate data based on specific subgroups of students (e.g., English language learners, students with disabilities, migrant students, Native American/Alaskan Native students).
Data Points to Verify Risk	EWS data are not used or are used alone to verify decisions about whether a student is or is not at risk and to develop a hypothesis for the underlying root cause.	EWS data are used in concert with at least one other data source related to individual, classroom, school, family, or community factors to verify decisions about whether a student is or is not at risk and to develop a hypothesis for the underlying root cause.	EWS data are used in concert with at least two other data sources related to individual, classroom, school, family, or community factors to verify decisions about whether a student is or is not at risk and to develop a hypothesis for the underlying root cause.

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5. Intervention and Supports: <i>Interventions and supports of varying focus (e.g., attendance, course performance, behavior) and intensity—aligned to address identified root causes of risk—provided to support dropout prevention efforts</i>			
Schedules	School schedules are not aligned to support multiple levels of intervention and support based on student need; inadequate time is available for interventions; schedules are inflexible and cannot support changes based on student need.	School schedules are partially aligned to support multiple levels of intervention and high-quality instruction based on student need; some additional time is built in for interventions; schedules are somewhat flexible and can support some changes based on student need.	School schedules are aligned to support multiple levels of intervention and high-quality instruction based on student need; adequate additional time is built in for interventions; schedules are flexible and can support changes to student groupings as needed.
Intervention and Support Selection	There is no evidence that selection of dropout prevention interventions and supports is driven by student data including EWS data and other data sources, and no identified decision-making approach is used.	There is partial evidence that selection of dropout prevention interventions and supports is driven by student data including EWS data and other data sources, and that the decision making is guided by a consistent approach and decision rules.	There is strong and consistent evidence that selection of dropout prevention interventions and supports is driven by student data including EWS data and other data, and that the decision making is guided by a consistent approach and decision rules.
Universal Interventions (Tier I)	Schoolwide interventions are not provided to support dropout prevention efforts, or the interventions are not: a. Research based, b. Delivered by trained staff, c. Aligned to the needs of the school, and d. Delivered consistently by all staff.	Schoolwide interventions are provided to some students, or schoolwide interventions may be provided to all students, but they may not be: a. Research based, b. Delivered by trained staff, c. Aligned to the needs of the school, and d. Delivered consistently by all staff.	Schoolwide interventions are provided to all students to support dropout prevention efforts, and they are: a. Research based, b. Delivered by trained staff, c. Aligned to the needs of the school, and d. Delivered consistently by all staff.

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Targeted Interventions (Tier II)	<p>Targeted interventions are not provided to groups of students with similar needs, or the interventions are not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research based, b. Aligned to the needs of a group of students, c. Delivered by trained staff, and d. Delivered in a group size and dosage that are optimal (according to research) for the age and needs of the students. 	<p>Targeted interventions are provided to groups of students with similar needs, but the interventions may not be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research based, b. Aligned to the needs of a group of students, c. Delivered by trained staff, and d. Delivered in a group size and dosage that are optimal (according to research) for the age and needs of the students. 	<p>Targeted interventions are provided to groups of students with similar needs, and the interventions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research based, b. Aligned to the needs of a group of students, c. Delivered by trained staff, and d. Delivered in a group size and dosage that are optimal (according to research) for the age and needs of the students.
Intensive Intervention (Tier III)	<p>Intensive interventions are not provided, or there is no evidence that intensive intervention consistently meets the following criteria for all students in need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research based b. Aligned to individual student needs c. Intensified appropriately (more intensive than targeted interventions) d. Delivered by trained staff e. Delivered in a group size and dosage that are optimal (according to research) for the age and needs of the students 	<p>There is some evidence that intensive intervention meets the following criteria, but criteria are not met consistently for all students in need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research based b. Aligned to individual student needs c. Intensified appropriately (more intensive than targeted interventions) d. Delivered by trained staff e. Delivered in a group size and dosage that are optimal (according to research) for the age and needs of the students 	<p>There is evidence that intensive intervention consistently meets the following criteria for all students in need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research based b. Aligned to individual student needs c. Intensified appropriately (more intensive than targeted interventions). d. Delivered by trained staff e. Delivered in a group size and dosage that are optimal (according to research) for the age and needs of the students

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Subgroups	There is little or no evidence that staff can articulate information and factors that they consider when adopting and implementing interventions and supports to address targeted subgroups including students with disabilities, homeless or neglected/delinquent students, migrant students, English language learners, Native American/Alaskan Native students.	There is inconsistent evidence that staff can articulate information and factors that they consider when adopting and implementing interventions and supports to address targeted subgroups including students with disabilities, homeless or neglected/delinquent students, migrant students, English language learners, Native American/Alaskan Native students.	There is strong and consistent evidence that staff can articulate information and factors that they consider when adopting and implementing interventions and supports to address targeted subgroups including students with disabilities, homeless or neglected/delinquent students, migrant students, English language learners, Native American/Alaskan Native students.
6. Progress Monitoring: <i>Ongoing and frequent monitoring of student progress across levels of intervention to monitor responsiveness to interventions and supports, and to make adjustments and adaptations as needed</i>			
Monitoring Progress	Progress is not monitored for students identified as at risk and participating in interventions.	f. Progress is monitored for some students identified as at risk and participating in interventions, or progress monitoring occurs infrequently or inconsistently.	g. Progress is monitored across all levels including students identified as at risk and participating in interventions and monitored at regular intervals (determined on basis of student need) and with a consistent approach.
Progress Monitoring Data	One or none of the following occurs. Progress monitoring data are used to: a. Make decisions about continuing, reassigning, or terminating interventions for flagged students. b. Identify gaps in the available supports and interventions for students, select new intervention strategies, or adapt interventions as needed. c. Provide knowledge about the general effectiveness of interventions, based on data from	There is some evidence that at least two of the following occurs. Progress monitoring data are used to: a. Make decisions about continuing, reassigning, or terminating interventions for flagged students. b. Identify gaps in the available supports and interventions for students, select new intervention strategies, or adapt interventions as needed. c. Provide knowledge about the general effectiveness of	There is evidence that all of the following occurs. Progress monitoring data are used to: a. Make decisions about continuing, reassigning, or terminating interventions for flagged students. b. Identify gaps in the available supports and interventions for students, select new intervention strategies, or adapt interventions as needed. c. Provide knowledge about the general effectiveness of

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	<p>monitoring students participating in each program.</p> <p>d. Share information with appropriate stakeholders about student needs, the impact of existing interventions, and the need for additional interventions, if applicable.</p>	<p>interventions, based on data from monitoring students participating in each program.</p> <p>d. Share information with appropriate stakeholders about student needs, the impact of existing interventions, and the need for additional interventions, if applicable.</p>	<p>interventions, based on data from monitoring students participating in each program.</p> <p>d. Share information with appropriate stakeholders about student needs, the impact of existing interventions, and the need for additional interventions, if applicable.</p>
<p>7. Continuous Improvement: System for collecting and analyzing data to measure fidelity and effectiveness of EWS implementation</p>			
<p>Assess and Improve</p>	<p>None of the following criteria are met:</p> <p>a. Specific goals are set, and there is a process for monitoring the school’s EWS implementation to identify and intervene to support students at risk of dropping out of school.</p> <p>b. Relevant staff have and use time to review the school’s EWS implementation to identify and intervene to support students at risk of dropping out of school.</p> <p>c. Relevant staff generate, document, and follow through with implementation revision.</p>	<p>At least one of the following criteria is met:</p> <p>a. Specific goals are set, and there is a process for monitoring the school’s EWS implementation to identify and intervene to support students at risk of dropping out of school.</p> <p>b. Relevant staff have and use time to review the school’s EWS implementation to identify and intervene to support students at risk of dropping out of school.</p> <p>c. Relevant staff generate, document, and follow through with implementation revision.</p>	<p>All of the following criteria are met:</p> <p>a. Specific goals are set, and there is a process for monitoring the school’s EWS implementation to identify and intervene to support students at risk of dropping out of school.</p> <p>b. Relevant staff have and use time to review the school’s EWS implementation to identify and intervene to support students at risk of dropping out of school.</p> <p>c. Relevant staff generate, document, and follow through with implementation revision.</p>