



Academic Success

Ensuring that students succeed academically and graduate high school, prepared for higher education, career, and community

United Way
of Dane County

United
Way



The power of many. Working for all.

New Goal

Listening to our community stakeholders, reviewing research and data and in recognition of the necessity of preparing students to advance beyond high school to establish individual and family stability, United Way of Dane County has restated our Agenda for Change strategic goal: **Students succeed academically and graduate high school, prepared for higher education, career and community.**

We expect that at least 95% of all students in Dane County graduate high school in 6 years*. To meet and exceed this ultimate goal, we will produce accelerated outcomes for students of color and students from low-income families, achieving an interim goal of a 90% or higher by 2022.



At United Way of Dane County, we know that **a good education is one of the building blocks of a stable life.**

That's why our **Academic Success Community Solutions Team (CST)**, comprised of experts and community leaders with extensive knowledge of youth and education, reviewed the results of our 2014 Academic Success Mobilization Plan in 2017.

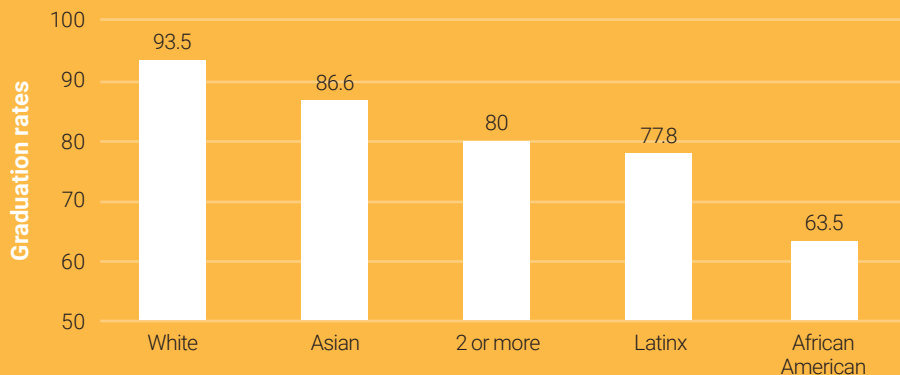
Here is what the CST discovered:

We've worked to increase graduation rates, particularly for the most marginalized youth, supporting our larger vision of eliminating poverty and stabilizing families.

Despite successes, **disparate educational outcomes still harm our community.**

United Way of Dane County will work with community partners to ensure that **students succeed academically and graduate high school, prepared for higher education, career, and community.**

Dane County Graduation rates by race/ethnicity 2015-2016



White: 11 districts report 2927 graduates of 3131 in cohort.
Asian: 4 districts report 195 graduates of 225 in cohort.
2 or more: 5 districts report 170 graduates of 212 in cohort.
Latinx: 6 districts report 344 graduates of 442 in cohort.

African American: 7 districts report 364 graduates of 573 in cohort.

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

* Many youth in Dane County face barriers that do not reflect their ability to graduate, but rather their ability to graduate on time. Jobs that support family obligations, economic hardship, and issues related to immigration status lead many students to slow or temporarily stop, but ultimately continue high school. Six year graduation rates reflect the resiliency of students who experience life's barriers.

Through all this engagement, the CST discovered that we cannot address academic achievement without supporting the whole child. In order for **students to succeed academically and graduate high school prepared for higher education, career and community**, they need a well-rounded set of skills and abilities beyond academic success solely measured by content mastery. Therefore, strategies added to this mobilization plan include amplified, coordinated efforts to improve students' mental and social-emotional health.

To reach our goals, The Academic Success CST recommends the following strategies:

Strategy 1:

Facilitate access to additional learning opportunities to enhance students' mastery of academic content. Continue focus on third grade reading, eliminating summer reading loss, and completion of Algebra by 10th grade. Proficiency in core subjects of math and literacy are critical.

Strategy 2:

Build students' social/emotional and non-cognitive skills. Focus on building non-cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. These are traits and habits that employers look for in employees and that help students succeed.

Strategy 3:

Ensure students' behavioral health and wellness. National research and local experience confirms the importance of providing behavioral health supports that remove or minimize barriers to learning.

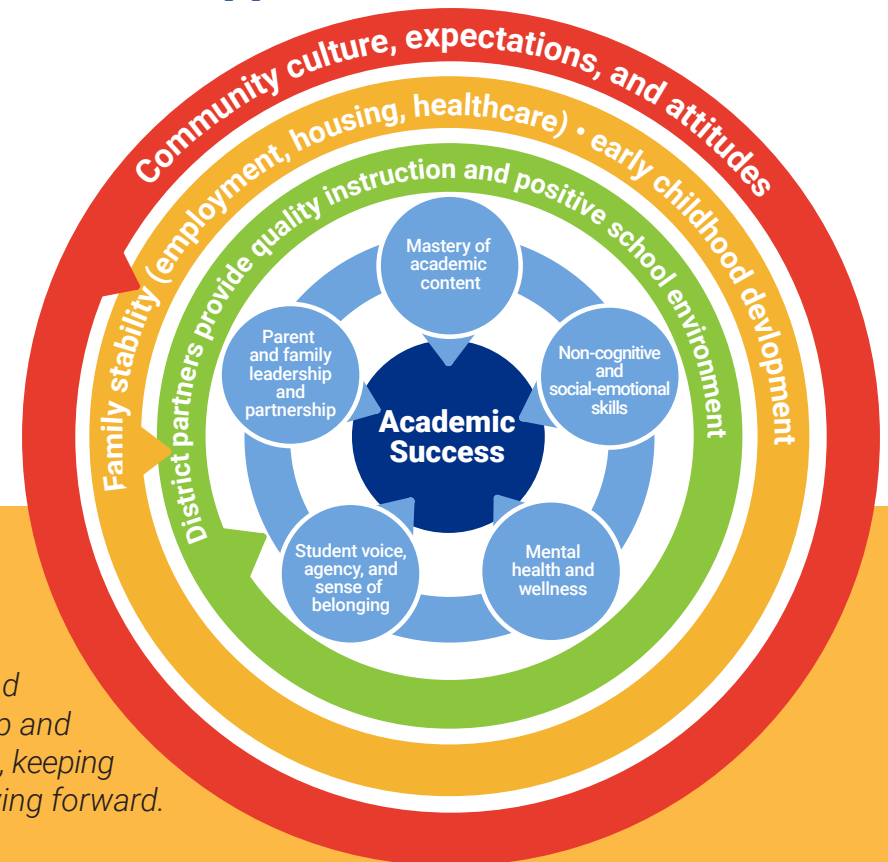
Strategy 4:

Foster connection, belonging, leadership and academic success with opportunity youth (disconnected or at risk of disconnecting). Engagement and academic achievement go hand-in-hand. A student's school experience, including relationships with adults, feelings of safe, supportive environments and connections to peers, coupled with high expectations for learning all contribute to a sense of belonging at school and in the community.

Strategy 5:

Recognize family engagement as a key component to improve student success. All district partners recognize parent and family engagement as a key component to improving student outcomes. We will give preference to programs that seek our investment that show parent engagement activities and innovation, and anticipated/ actual results.

Holistic approach to student success



"I was raised with an extended family structure that included aunts, uncles, and siblings. My parents were like my hubcap and the other adults in my life were the spokes, keeping the wheels in place and keeping me moving forward. I raised my children the same way."

– Parent, Verona Area School District



Why it matters

- Reading by 3rd Grade predicts later academic success.
- Being on track for 9th Grade is crucial for success in career and life. Students who take higher-level math and science are more likely to attend and complete college.
- Graduation is a minimum requirement for career success. Too few students meet this minimum, contributing to Dane County's racial disparities in employment and health.
- 10% of Dane County youth see or witness trauma, 18% of MMSD youth deal with behavioral health issues. This can often lead to underlying anger, depression, anxiety, and other behaviors that stifle effective learning.
- Children from low income families lose over two months of learning each summer because of inability to practice reading. This "catch up mode" leads to a multi year learning gap by middle school.
- Our schools are better when more students are ready to learn, which strengthens our workforce.



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Full mobilization plan is available at www.unitedwaydanecounty.org/mobilization-plans

Continue the conversation with us

