Every Child a Graduate
College and Career Ready

Dropout Early Warning System (DEWS)

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is creating an Early Warning System to identify potential dropouts and late graduates. The Dropout Early Warning System (DEWS) will increase schools' chances of intervening early to keep students learning in school and prevent dropout or unplanned late graduation. At the heart of DPI's vision, Every Child a Graduate College & Career Ready, is the goal that every student graduates from high school. Approximately 6,000 students drop out of Wisconsin public schools each year. While most of these students drop out in the 11th or 12th grades, it is during the middle grades these students typically exhibit characteristics connected to dropping out, falling behind and losing interest in school. DEWS is focused on identifying those students—in grades 7-9—that are most at risk of dropping out or having an unplanned late graduation.

Middle School Focus

DEWS is an online tool that identifies students at risk of dropping out or graduating late in grades 7-9. The tool allows educators to plan interventions and additional services before the critical transition to high school. To identify students at risk for dropout and late graduation DEWS uses:

- Attendance rates
- Discipline incidents
- Mobility (school and district moves)
- Assessment results

> You can access DEWS scores for students in your school from within WISEdash, DPI's secure online reporting environment.
> http://wise.dpi.wi.gov/wise_dashhome
>
> For more information about DEWS and WISEdash, please visit the DEWS About the Data page:
> http://wise.dpi.wi.gov/wise_dashdews

By comparing how previous graduates and dropouts performed on these same data points, we can identify which current middle grade students have an increased likelihood of dropping out or of having an unplanned late graduation. Risk factors are calculated uniquely for each school and district for greater accuracy.

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PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent

Guiding Focused Intervention

At the beginning of the school year, schools will be given access to the DEWS score and risk indicators for all of the middle grade schools in their school with data. The students and scores will be displayed securely in WISEdash, along with other key data about the student. The risk score should be combined with local data; such as current grades, behavior, attendance and test data. Those identified at risk should then be provided with more intensive school-based services. Schools can also involve parents in providing extra support and ensuring regular student attendance.

The DEWS score will be explained in the accompanying DEWS Action Guide available from DPI. This guide helps educators move through the process of looking up the DEWS score in WISEdash, to combining DEWS with more current local data, and finally presents examples of strategies for additional student supports.

DEWS identifies current students who have exhibited the same behaviors and tendencies as previous students who dropped out or graduated late. It will identify over 6 in 10 students who will eventually dropout or graduate late. However, not all students identified will actually drop-out or have an unplanned late graduation. For those students that it does identify, the DEWS provides a red flag to schools early enough to make data-based decisions, provide interventions, and focus available resources. Like a "check engine" light on a car, it will signal that a closer look and perhaps service is needed.

To get help with access to WISEdash and DEWS, please visit the DPI Help Desk: http://helpdesk.dpi.wi.gov/user.html

DEWS will continue to evolve and become more accurate as access to high-quality data increases. DEWS scores will not be part of the accountability system, but rather a tool educators may use, preferably as a data point, along with their local data, within their Response to Intervention system, to identify appropriate student supports.

For more information about DEWS and WISEdash, please visit the DEWS About the Data page: http://wise.dpi.wi.gov/wise_dashdews. Further resources available here include the DEWS Action Guide, the DEWS Checklist, and a description of DEWS data elements available to your school today.

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