



## THE GRADNATION ACTION PLATFORM

**Our Goal: Increase the nation's on-time high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020**

*The GradNation Action Platform* is based on the collective experience and expertise of individuals at organizations engaged with young people across the country. The platform areas are a statement of best practice – they are what has been demonstrated to accelerate improvements in the high school graduation rate. These are not one-shot, silver bullet focus areas. In fact, a comprehensive approach, one that addresses at least three platform areas, is probably required.

- 1. Use high-quality data to monitor cohort progress, identify struggling students, inform effective interventions, and provide accountability for overall progress.**

*High-quality data is required to promote academic success for all young people regardless of their unique backgrounds, strengths, and postsecondary pathways. Data is much more than test scores and should include data on absenteeism, student perceptions of the school environment, and other measures of college and career readiness. Any effort to increase the graduation rate must be informed by student-level data that tells the story of how students are progressing through high school, identifies barriers to success, and what it takes to get them back on track to graduation. Relatedly, all stakeholders have an interest in continuing to improve the integrity and accuracy of graduation rate data.*

- 2. Respond to the non-academic factors that influence school participation and performance.**

*Research shows that non-academic factors such as chronic absenteeism, trauma, poverty, and adversity negatively impact academic performance. Young people living in challenging circumstances are more likely to drop out of high school. Community partners can support efforts to keep youth in high school by meeting their mental and physical health needs and building a sense belonging in their community and school.*

**3. Improve school climate by promoting a sense of caring and connection between students and in-school staff through disciplinary practices and policies that are inclusive and ensure students stay in school through to graduation.**

*A positive school environment that is safe, supportive, and inclusive is essential for student success. Many young people leave high school for disciplinary reasons that stem from impacts of the non-academic aspects of their lives. Based on research, when schools reduce suspensions and expulsions they are more likely to be characterized by improved interpersonal relationships among teachers, students, and families.*

**4. Increase the number and quality of caring adult relationships in students' lives.**

*Caring adult relationships promote positive academic, behavioral, and psychological development so that youth can succeed in school and life. Stable, trusting relationships provide important social support so that youth can graduate high school. A web of caring adults includes parents, family members, school counselors, teachers, school staff, social workers, youth workers, national service members, volunteers, and coaches.*

**5. Re-engage young people who have left school by providing accessible and effective options for completing high school prepared for success in college and/or career.**

*Research shows that the reasons students drop out of school or are pushed out of the traditional school system are multifaceted, and in order address them, a tiered system of intervention is needed. Factors that affect a student's decision to drop out include, but are not limited to, uncontrollable life events that happen outside of school, poor academic performance, perceived disconnection between school academics and job expectations, low student engagement, and a lack of support.*

**6. Connect the high school experience with pathways to postsecondary education, workforce readiness and participation, and overall adult success.**

*Communities should provide clear, connected, and responsive pathways so graduates can go on to participate fully in the economy and in their communities. Pathways may include a two-year or four-year college, trade school, career, and/or national service. Public-private partnerships that provide internship, mentorship, or project-based learning opportunities can make the high school years truly preparatory for life outside of the K-12 system.*