



## Session Summary

Session 7 • July 27, 2021

### Serving the Unique Needs of High School Students: On Track for Graduation and Postsecondary Success

**Presenters:** Sam Purdy, Deputy Director of Engagement, Connecticut RISE Network;  
and Emily Pallin, Executive Director, Connecticut RISE Network

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#### Overview

The RISE Network partners with Connecticut public high schools and districts to ensure all students graduate with a plan and the skills and confidence to achieve college and career success. This document summarizes evidence-based strategies to support Grade 9 on-track achievement and postsecondary success.



#### Freshman Success

Research shows that Grade 9 on-track achievement is the single best predictor of whether students will graduate from high school within four years — more so than test scores, family income, or race/ethnicity.<sup>1</sup> A strong foundation in Grade 9 serves as a building block for high school and postsecondary success.

- **On-Track Data Teams:** By organizing Grade 9 students and staff on teams, schools can create smaller learning communities for freshmen. On-track data meetings engage teams of Grade 9 educators in weekly protocol-driven, student-centered, and solutions-oriented conversations to better meet student needs.
- **On-Track Conferences:** On-track conferences create a venue for students to engage in quarterly, one-on-one conversations with caring adults. Conversations are guided by a student data profile and grade-appropriate protocol and offer a space for students to discuss their progress, difficulties, and goals.
- **On-Track Coordinators (OTCs):** OTCs are youth development professionals who serve as champions and advocates for a caseload of Grade 9 students. This focused student caseload allows OTCs to provide deep support for students with attendance, academic, social, and/or behavioral risk factors in middle school.
- **Grade 9 and Grade 12 Summer Programs:** Summer programs focusing on Grade 9 and Grade 12 help students experience strong middle to high school and postsecondary transitions. Grade 9 summer bridge programs introduce students to high school expectations and facilitate community connections. Grade 12 college and career academies give students a headstart on the postsecondary planning process.

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1. Elaine Allensworth, [What Matters for Staying On-Track](#), University of Chicago.

## Spark Innovation Session 7: Serving the Unique Needs of High School Students

### Postsecondary Success

Connecticut's youth are joining an economy that demands skilled workers and critical thinkers. By 2025, 70% of Connecticut's jobs will require some education beyond a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is critically important for all students to not only graduate from high school, but to also graduate with postsecondary plans for success in the military, higher education, trade/technical programs, and/or the workforce.

- **Postsecondary Campaigns:** Postsecondary campaigns engage students in planful events and activities during their senior year to make the college and career planning process highly visible and less daunting. Strategic campaign calendars include events such as #WhyApply Day in September, a FAFSA launch event in October, and a year-end Signing Day to celebrate students' plans.
- **Postsecondary Data Teams:** Postsecondary data meetings engage teams in regular conversations about Grade 11 and 12 students and their progress developing postsecondary plans and completing postsecondary access milestones. Counselors and administrators use data and collaborative tracking tools to identify students needing additional support, as well as specific milestones that may require school-wide attention.
- **Summer Melt Texting Campaigns:** Summer melt texting campaigns provide students with targeted reminders and nudges during the summer months to ensure graduates pursue their college and career goals. Students receive personalized text messages to stay on track towards their postsecondary goals.

### RISE Network Contact Information

 [RISE website](#) with [resources portal](#) and [blog](#)

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2. [2018 Field Guide to Education](#), ConnCAN.