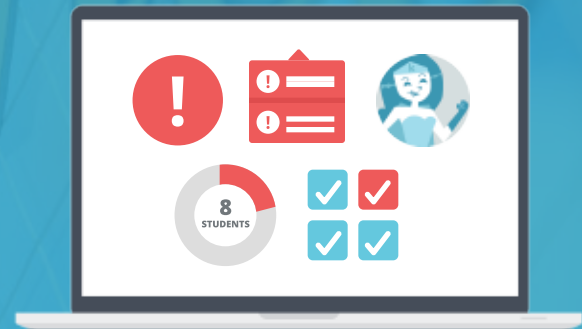Quick Guide to

Early Warning Indicators

for Learning Intervention

kickboard™

Introduction

Students of all ages who struggle in school send out warning signals to let us know they may be veering off the path to graduation. But since many educators are juggling disparate systems and disjointed data, it isn't always easy to track and act on these signals without an enormous amount of time and effort.

Your decision to read this e-book indicates that you're thinking of using early warning indicators in a program for intervention management.

The fact that you're doing your due diligence tells us that you're serious about ensuring your program's success, and we want you to be successful.

So, in this e-book, we cover what early warning indicators are, why they're important at every grade level, how to use them, best practices for making them a true part of your teaching culture, and finally, how Kickboard can help. It's a quick read, but you'll have the fundamentals for setting things up correctly from the start, saving you from headaches in the long run.

We designed this guide to answer the **5 questions** educators most often ask us.

If you have follow-up questions, contact us on Twitter via our handle **@kickboard** or on Facebook at **facebook.com/Kickboardapp**.

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Contents

What Are Early Warning Indicators?

An early warning indicator is a "red flag" that alerts educators when a student may be veering off track. While specifics may vary from district to district, the following areas are where those red flags generally will be found:

- ✓ **ATTENDANCE ISSUES**
- ✓ **BEHAVIOR INFRACTIONS/ FREQUENCY OF INFRACTIONS WITHIN A GIVEN TIME PERIOD**
- ✓ **FAILING A CORE SUBJECT OR A NUMBER OF COURSES**
- ✓ **LOW SKILL MASTERY**
- ✓ **FAILING STANDARDIZED TESTS**
- ✓ **GPA BELOW A SPECIFIED LEVEL**
- ✓ **GRADE RETENTION**

By helping you to identify at-risk students,

these early warning indicators can allow you to see behind classroom doors and empower teachers to intervene early to keep students on track for success at every grade level.

Let's take the first area, attendance, as an example.

A student who skips school a few times a year while maintaining passing grades may cause staffers to commiserate with each other in the teachers' lounge, but isn't likely to be in danger of being retained or dropping out of school.

So how do you know when to raise that red flag?

Thanks to years of research, the characteristics of effective early warning indicators are established:

"...can be empirically derived [identified through analysis of student data over an extensive period of time] but are also sometimes based on educator knowledge and common sense."

– On Track for Success by The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University and Civic Enterprises

"...are efficient predictors [of dropping out] ... relevant to the school district, and linked to supports."

– Using Early Warning Systems to Predict and Prevent Dropout by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities

IN THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS,

we'll discuss when and how to use early warning indicators to improve student performance, from the elementary level to the middle and high school levels.

Why Should Early Warning Indicators Matter to a District or School Administrator?

8
STUDENTS

When a student begins to disengage academically and/or socially from school, the process usually take years, even starting as early as elementary school. That process can present a significant obstacle to success for your school or district as well as for the student.

✅ **STUDENT REPORT CARDS AFFECT SCHOOL REPORT CARDS**

✅ **INDICATORS BOLSTER RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI) & SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

✅ **IF KIDS DON'T GET BACK ON TRACK EARLY, THEY OFTEN DERAIL COMPLETELY**

Student Report Cards Affect School Report Cards

All 50 states & the District of Columbia publish report cards on a school's performance.

Depending on the state, those performance reports can include school attendance, school suspensions and expulsions as well as graduation rates. All of those areas are negatively affected when students begin to disengage from school.

Indicators Bolster Response to Intervention (RtI) & Special Education Programs

In addition to being useful for catching problems in the general student population, early warning indicators are valuable tools for making your RtI and special education programs as effective as possible.

The indicators support your screening and assessments, either using the scores as part of your alert system so it's easier to evaluate what needs to be done or spotting problems that occur in between screenings or assessments. That way, students in need are never overlooked.

The RTI Network describes Response to Intervention as "a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs." Early warning indicators provide the alert you need to catch a learning or behavior issue as it appears, which also means that less intensive interventions may be required.

The indicators also help you continuously monitor the progress of special education students. They'll spot a student that's still struggling despite being on an IEP, so you'll immediately know when you have to review and revise the supports that student receives.

If Kids Don't Get Back on Track Early, They Often Derail Completely

The National High School Center's 2007 report revealed that the most reliable predictor of dropping out is whether a student has repeated a grade in elementary or middle school and that most future dropouts can be predicted as early as the sixth grade by studying academic and engagement issues in elementary and middle schools. In fact, Education Week published an article in July 2013 reporting that Maryland educators had found dropout indicators for first graders!

That's not to say that problems won't develop later in a student's academic career. But it does show that we can spot issues and turn things around for a student at any point. However, if educators don't know when or how students are at risk, they can't help those children.

What's heartbreaking is that a 2006 report, The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts, revealed that 70 percent of the dropouts surveyed were confident that they could have actually graduated. Even the majority of those with a low GPA believed they could have graduated.

AS THE NATIONAL DROPOUT PREVENTION CENTER/NETWORK STATES,

"The dropout problem is not one that can be addressed exclusively at the middle or high school levels; by then it is too late for some students.

The earlier a problem is identified and addressed, the greater will be the impact on students in at-risk situations."

How Can a School Use Early Warning Indicators to Improve Student Performance?

You can help students who are off track for end-of-year promotion or at risk for dropping out by making early warning indicators part of an overall early warning system.

An early warning system should adhere to three general principles to do the best job for you & your students:

1 The indicator alerts should go off when students are **just entering the danger zone.**

2 Those alerts (and the system in general) should **help you match the right type of action, support and/or intervention** to the student in need.

3 The system should **support your monitoring of a student's progress until he or she is back on track** to academic and/or behavioral success.

There are a few more things you will need to do to ensure the early warning system functions smoothly:

Establish thresholds

Since most indicators involve a number value (e.g., number of course failures, number of times absent, the GPA scale, etc.), you'll need to figure out what threshold raises the alarm. E.g., how many classes can a student fail before it's time for action?

Should course failure be combined with other factors (e.g., absenteeism) in order to get a more accurate feel of when it's time to intervene?

ESTABLISH THRESHOLDS

COLLECT ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION

CONDUCT REGULAR REVIEWS

Collect all pertinent information

Also, when you're reviewing indicator data, you'll need to determine if you have all the information you need to make an informed decision about what intervention best addresses the situation. Some educators resolve this issue by using historical data to develop "if...then" scenarios; a particular indicator or combination of indicators represent a scenario that launches a specific course of action.

For example, if a student performs at or below proficiency on a benchmark test for math and also has poor performance in his math course, then he's flagged for attendance in an intervention or tutoring program.

Note: Since they'll be assigning students to interventions, all educators should know what supports and interventions are available in their school, district, and community. Information on resources can slip through the cracks, especially with newcomers to your school system.

ESTABLISH THRESHOLDS

COLLECT ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION

CONDUCT REGULAR REVIEWS

Conduct regular reviews

Finally, use monitoring data to conduct regular reviews of your indicators as well as intervention and support resources. The data will help you confirm that your indicators are indeed working or whether any thresholds need to be adjusted.

You'll also see which interventions are best at addressing specific student needs, whether any can be used for issues you didn't think of, and if any need to be fine-tuned (e.g., the data shows that the intervention becomes effective when the frequency of students' participation is increased).

ESTABLISH THRESHOLDS

COLLECT ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION

CONDUCT REGULAR REVIEWS

What Are the School Administrator "Do's" for Bringing Early Warning Indicators into the Teaching Culture?

Following are a few best practices you can implement to make early warning indicators an intrinsic part of the school teaching culture:

DO

Obtain input about what should constitute early warning indicators from personnel (e.g., administrators, teachers, counselors, special education teachers, English language learner instructors, etc.), in addition to using research & advice from external experts.

Not only will this help with internal buy-in, but it's also an important factor in creating your system. While research has identified indicators, every district culture has its own nuances. After looking at the history of struggling and/or disruptive students as well as dropouts in your school system, your team may find that only certain indicators need to be applied or that certain combinations of indicators are more useful than others.

DO

Ensure teachers and administrators receive **training on how to access, analyze, and use the indicator data to inform interventions.**

If your staffers are uncomfortable using the early warning system, they may try to work around it or completely avoid it.

DO

Use visuals like charts and infographics to assist with data analysis.

The intensity of the professional development that staffers must receive will depend on the user-friendliness of the system that's been put in place. Visuals help users quickly and easily understand the data, so they can decide on appropriate interventions even if they haven't had much technical training on how to do data-based decision making.

DO

Keep track of how the interventions are impacting students in terms of academic and behavioral performance.

We mentioned this before but it bears repeating: unless your indicators are tied to effective interventions, you'll get the warnings but you won't be able to help students in need. Monitoring students' progress lets you know whether or not they're showing a positive response to the support so that you can revise or change the intervention as needed.
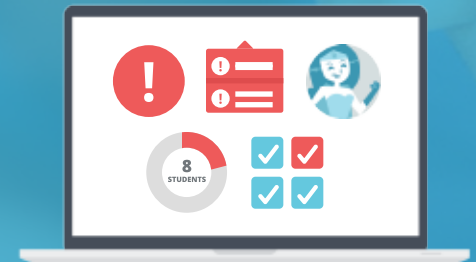
DO

Make the early warning indicators part of your entire K-12 system.

If you're working at the district level, it may be easier to make this the case, but if you're at the school level, don't let that stop you from advocating for this. Making indicators part of the district and school culture means that all teachers are on the same page. Students can start the process of disengaging at any point — even in elementary school — and it's much easier to tackle a student's issues when they're fresh than when that student comes to you after years of discouragement and disillusion. In other words, the sooner students get help, the better.

How Do Early Warning Indicators Work in Kickboard?

This section focuses on Kickboard's new Early Warning Indicator system (when we're referring to our system's name, we capitalize the term), which is now available in the Kickboard instructional management solution at no additional cost.

Each indicator serves as an automated, actionable trigger, letting you easily see how many, and which, students are off track for moving on to the next grade level or for future academic success.

You can use the indicators not only for the general student population, but also for RtI and special education programs.

Configured To Your Culture

Based on industry research on what best predicts a child's likelihood of dropping out, our indicators are fully customizable so that they can be configured to your culture.

Indicator categories include:

- ☑ **GPA**

- ☑ **FAILING MULTIPLE COURSES**

- ☑ **SPECIFIC COURSE GRADES**

- ☑ **PERCENTAGE OF SKILLS MASTERED**

- ☑ **ATTENDANCE (ABSENCES AND/OR TARDIES)**

- ☑ **BEHAVIOR POINT TOTAL**

Custom Indicators

The Early Warning Indicator system also lets you create your own indicator.

That custom indicator is displayed on the student profile page, and it can be in either a number or checkbox format:

CUSTOM NUMBER FORMAT lets you track student progress on assessments outside the Kickboard platform, e.g., standardized tests.

CUSTOM CHECKBOX FORMAT can be used in combination with other Early Warning Indicator system conditions to connect school culture and academic metrics. For example, the box can be set to become automatically checked when a student is on the football team and his GPA drops below a 3.0.

Automated, Actionable Data

The Early Warning Indicator system is like a powerful system of "always-on" smart triggers that continuously monitor GPA, grades, skills, attendance, behaviors, and more in order to provide instant alerts and dynamic infographics that help you make the right decisions to keep students on track.

All data entered into Kickboard is updated in real-time and immediately accessible, allowing teachers to directly act upon the data.

And if you've been using Excel files as your early warning system, you won't believe how much time you'll save with an Early Warning Indicator system that's integrated with a configurable framework to develop 360-degree profiles of student performance!

THE EARLY WARNING INDICATOR SYSTEM is the newest enhancement to the Kickboard instructional management solution, which helps K-12 educators gain a truly 360-degree view of their students for even more informed daily decision making.

Conditional Statements & Scenarios

Additionally, our Early Warning Indicators let you combine or stack indicator criteria so that they form conditional statements, which means that you can fine-tune your system for more accurate identification of off-track students.

For example, a student may be considered off track if her GPA is equal to or less than 2.0 and her behavior point total is less than 30. Or a student may be off track if his profile page has a checked custom field and a he has a GPA of less than 3.0.

OUR EARLY WARNING INDICATORS SYSTEM ALSO CONTAINS SEVERAL PRE-ESTABLISHED SCENARIOS (with adjustable thresholds for each), so educators can take action as soon as an issue arises.

For example, if a student is absent more than 8 days and is failing 2 courses, the system will add her to a list for phone calls to be made home.

Or, a student who has high academic performance but is exhibiting behavior issues can be flagged to visit with a counselor since he may be acting out due to boredom.

About Kickboard

The Kickboard instructional management solution gives K-12 educators the tools to quickly establish consistent practices for effective classroom management school- and district-wide. Using the highly configurable, web-based platform, educators can create a performance-based culture that leads to sustainable school improvement and long-term student success.

Going far beyond typical classroom management systems or online gradebooks, Kickboard is the hub of classroom decision making. It gives educators a configurable framework to develop 360-degree profiles of student performance, including grades, standards mastery, reading growth, prescribed interventions, rubric observations, attendance and, most uniquely, student behavior and character strengths.

Kickboard's dashboard-to-detail reporting provides real-time data to better inform decisions at the district, school, class and individual student levels.

The end result is a high-performing, data-driven culture where teachers make instructional decisions based on an understanding of the whole child, principals provide targeted professional development to improve teacher effectiveness, and parents become highly engaged in their child's education

kickboard™

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