

## Identifying at risk students in secondary grades through civil society and community participation to improve graduation rates

### Summary:

Diplomas Now helps middle and high schools in America's largest cities ensure that students graduate from school, with a readiness for further education or economic opportunity. It is a fully integrated approach that improves a **school's curriculum and instruction** by identifying students who need assistance and areas of intervention.

### Objectives and Rationale:

The programme is based on research by one of the nation's leading dropout experts who found that about half of all eventual dropouts can be identified by the end of sixth grade, and close to 75 percent by the start of high school. Studies found that middle-school students who fail their courses, have poor attendance and poor behaviour seldom graduate. It was also found that half of the students who drop out of school every year come from just 12 percent of the nation's high schools. Diplomas Now identifies those schools and students early and works to eliminate the root causes of dropout.

### Key Stakeholders:

Diplomas Now is a partnership of 3 national non-profits- Johns Hopkins University's Talent Development Secondary, City Year, and Communities in School- working to transform the Nation's most challenged middle and high schools in high-poverty areas. Resources and staff from the three partners are brought into schools to- restructure the way classes are organized and taught, identify students who need support, and provide the additional people and training needed.

In 2010, Diplomas Now was awarded a USD 30 million federal grant, Investing in Innovation (i3), to implement and study its intervention model in 32 middle and high schools across the country. Its founding investor is PepsiCo Foundation.

### Implementation Strategy:

Diplomas Now identifies schools to partner with the school community so every student has the support of a community of enabling staff and resources, and that the student is enabled by capacity building and tools to improve student success. Diplomas Now team organizes and supports schools to strengthen achievement and engagement by working with administrators and teachers. **Diplomas Now provides curriculum, teacher coaching and student support. An early warning system identifies struggling students, and the team works to get each student back on track.** Young adults, working full-time in the school, encourage and aid students, enable them to attend school through phone calls if they don't show up, provide tutoring and celebrate positive behaviour. After school, they help with homework and involve students in service and enrichment programs. For the neediest students, Diplomas Now adopts a case-based approach and connects them with community resources, such as counselling, health care, housing, food and clothing. Diplomas Now team tracks attendance, behaviour and course performance – student by student – on a biweekly basis. The programme has seen a marked impact on student absenteeism, suspensions, learning outcomes in English and Math. It has served 30,000 students between 2010-2017.

### **Replicability and Sustainability:**

A streamlined and guided process for community and civil society partnership can have high yielding results. Mentorship and funds can be provided by state and district level departments initially for rollout, before the programme is made self-sustainable.