

Volusia County Schools
Early Warning System (EWS): Frequently Asked Questions

1) Why is the district committed to Early Warning Systems?

For several years, the district has been using an Early Warning System (EWS) to identify students on identified indicators to keep students on track for graduation. The EWS also helps schools to monitor trends in their data to find alternatives and interventions (e.g., alternatives to suspensions and interventions for chronic absenteeism). Recognizing the research and power behind these predictive systems, the Florida legislature passed legislation in 2017 mandating districts to develop early warning systems with specified indicators for students in Grades K-8. These EWS indicators are also included in School Improvement Plans.

2) What are the mandated EWS indicators in Florida legislation?

House Bill 7069 (2017) mandates that the following indicators be included in Early Warning Systems throughout Florida districts:

- Absences of 10% or more year to date
- One or more suspensions year to date (in or out of school)
- FSA score of 1 in ELA and/or math (during most current administration)
- Course failure in ELA and/or math
- A substantial reading deficiency for students in K-3

3) What is the role of schools when students are identified on the EWS?

When students have at least two of the mandated indicators, they are identified on the school's EWS. Per legislation, schools must develop intervention plans for students identified and consult with the student's parents/guardians about the plan. These consultations and intervention plans are captured by VCS educators on PST 2 and PST 4 respectively. Note that this does NOT require a PST meeting, but it does require a consultation with the parents/guardians. In addition, the school's EWS report is referenced in the School Improvement Plans with specific data and action plans discussed during meetings.

4) Why has there been an increase in the number of students on my school's EWS from prior years?

Historically, the district has used a threshold of three indicators to identify a student for the EWS. House Bill 7069 requires the threshold as two indicators. To counterbalance this increase, the district has changed the counted indicators to only include those indicators required by the state as noted in item 2 above. However, recognizing the importance of grade retention, unweighted GPA below 2.0, and discipline referrals on future outcomes for students, schools will continue to find these indicators on the EWS reports. These indicators, much like the ESE and ELL indicators, do not "count" toward the EWS score. They are there however to provide more information to educators that may be helpful with intervention planning.

5) Are middle schools still required to hold a parent night for students on the EWS?

House Bill 7069 is the most current legislation addressing EWS and hence the requirements of Senate Bill 850 (specifically for middle schools) are no longer required. Middle schools are held to the statutory requirements of House Bill 7069 requiring consultation with parents/guardians and the development of an intervention plan.

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6) How are substantial reading deficiencies addressed within the EWS requirements?

While an EWS indicator for grades K-3, the area of substantial reading deficiency is currently not captured on the district's EWS report generated by Technology Services. Elementary schools will continue to provide parents with a notification letter when a student has been identified as having a substantial reading deficiency. The district letter has been modified however to include other indicators beyond a substantial reading deficiency that would result in a student's placement on the EWS. Teachers may select the option of no other indicators beyond the reading deficiency or checking boxes indicating which other indicators are present (e.g., absences of 10% or more year to date). When one or more indicator is checked in addition to the substantial reading deficiency, the student is considered part of the school's EWS and the parents/guardians are instructed via the letter to contact the school to discuss the intervention plan.

7) If a student has an IEP, will PST 2 and PST 4 be used for parent/guardian contacts and documentation of the intervention plan?

Typically, the IEP *is* the intervention plan that addresses areas that would place a student on an EWS (e.g., a student with an IEP for a Specific Learning Disability having interventions for low performance in ELA). When a student with an IEP has EWS indicators *unrelated to their disability* (e.g., suspensions and chronic absenteeism for a student with an IEP for speech articulation errors), these interventions and parent consultations would be documented on PST 2 and PST 4 as described in item 3. The school social worker is a resource for interventions for attendance issues and the school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker and behavior specialist can suggest interventions for students who have been suspended due to behavioral concerns. In addition, item 8 below provides resources for these areas. The plan developed is to be provided to the IEP team for inclusion at a future IEP meeting for the student.

8) Where can I find interventions for students on the EWS?

Evidence-based interventions to address areas on the EWS (e.g., alternatives to suspension, retention and chronic absenteeism) can be found on the [MTSS website](#) under the navigational link titled Early Warning System (EWS).

9) Are there indicators *not* included on the EWS report that are important to monitor?

Yes, research on early warning indicators confirm that teacher attendance rates are a strong predictor of student performance. More specifically, poor attendance by teachers is correlated with lower student achievement rates. So when it comes to reducing risk factors for students, there is no substitute for involved and present teachers.