



Retention & Keeping Students on Track

INSTRUCTOR / EDUCATOR PROGRAM - Unit 15

Applies to: Instructor / Educator

Suggested time: 3 hours (theory and planning)

How to use this plan: The lines under "Say" are scripted word for word so every class hears the same information - read them aloud. *Italic in brackets is what you do.* The jade "Teaching move" names the method; the "Students" line is their involvement.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify why students drop out.
- Recognize early warning signs.
- Build belonging and support that keep students enrolled.
- Create a plan to keep students on track to graduate.

Materials and Equipment

- SGS chapter slide deck, projector, and whiteboard
- Retention handout and a student-support-plan worksheet
- Student-educator workbook

Key Terms

retention, attrition, early warning signs, belonging, community, support systems, motivation, completion, intervention.

Lesson Sequence

1. Opening Hook - 10 min

Teaching move: Every student who quits is a loss.

SAY (read aloud):

Every student who drops out is a dream deferred and a graduate the industry never gets. Many leave not because they cannot do the work, but because they felt lost, alone, or discouraged - things you can prevent. Retention is one of the most important parts of your job. Today we learn to keep students enrolled and on track.

- **Students:** name a reason a student might consider dropping out.

2. Why Students Leave - 20 min

Teaching move: The real causes.

SAY (read aloud):

Students rarely leave for one reason. Common causes are falling behind and feeling overwhelmed, financial or life stress, not feeling they belong, losing motivation, or a single bad experience. Most of these are things an attentive educator can catch and address. Understanding why students leave is the first step to keeping them.



- **Students:** name two common reasons students leave.

3. Early Warning Signs - 20 min

Teaching move: Catch it early.

SAY (read aloud):

The signs come before the exit. Watch for dropping attendance, falling grades, withdrawal from the group, missed work, or a change in attitude. When you see them, you reach out right away - a private, caring check-in. A student who feels noticed and supported in week four rarely disappears in week eight. Early eyes save students.

- **Students:** name one early warning sign that a student may be slipping.

4. Building Belonging and Support - 20 min

Teaching move: Connection keeps students.

SAY (read aloud):

The single biggest retention tool is belonging. Students stay where they feel known, supported, and part of a community. You build it by learning names, celebrating progress, fostering peer connection, and connecting students to support - tutoring, advising, resources. And you keep motivation alive by reminding them why they started. Connected students complete.

- **Students:** name one way to help a student feel they belong.

5. Activity, Check, and Recap - 30 min

Teaching move: Build a plan and recall.

SAY (read aloud):

On the worksheet, build a support plan for an at-risk student. Quick check: when do you intervene with a slipping student? *[Pause.]* Early. What is the biggest retention tool? *[Pause.]* Belonging. To recap: know why students leave, watch for early signs, build belonging and support, and keep students connected to their goal.

- **Students:** complete a student-support plan.

Assessment

- Performance: a student-support plan.
- Written: quiz on retention and early intervention.
- Verbal: participation in the discussion.

Assignment

Read Retention & Keeping Students on Track and complete the workbook. Write your plan for spotting and supporting at-risk students.

Instructor Notes and Safety

Reinforce early intervention and building belonging.

Connect to Coaching & Student Success.