

**Start to Finish, using problem solving methods, is one way to address EWS indicators and provide intervention services.** Ideal students might include academic failures, attendance/suspensions, credit recovery courses – and other criteria.

**The start to finish program emphasizes problem solving as a protective factor.** If increased services are needed, the district, guidance counselors, parents, onsite school administrators (and others, as the case may dictate) are notified.

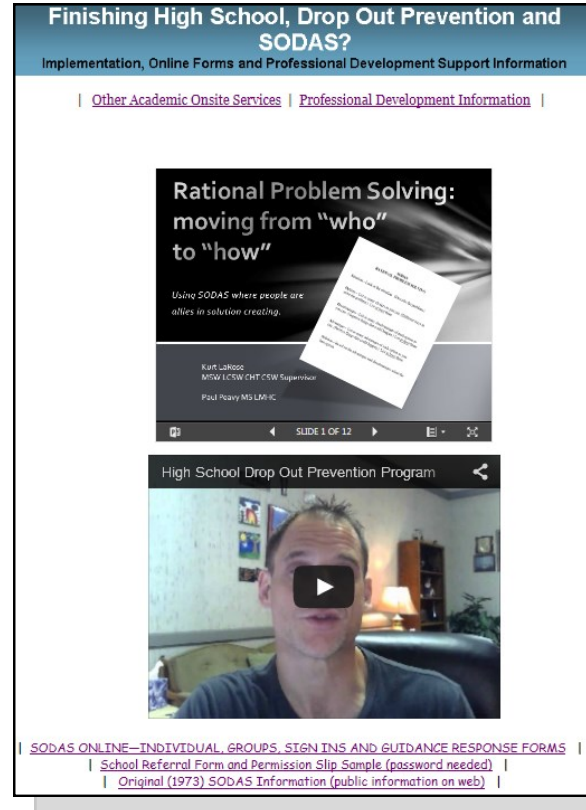
**The focus is solutions based, protective, and generates options to succeed—at the student level.** The program utilizes more affirmative terminology—the terminology of dropout prevention is used minimally. The primary goal is solution creating.

**Expertise matters in other ways too.** [The program developer](#) is an expert in school counseling services for rural school districts, has worked in residential facilities, and works in [private practice](#). Professional experience with youth dates back to the 1990's—when SODAS was first introduced through a behavioral modification program.

**Others can be trained to provide the services too!** In For schools who do not want onsite licensed professionals the district can identify what staff they wish to be trained in SODAS. Likewise, licensed professionals from other states can be trained to implement the program in their respective states. The services are provided by contract consultations.

**More information is on the web.** Information about the program and training can be found on the web at [TalkifUwant.com](#) (click the schools link and see drop-out prevention).

YouTube videos, Power Point slide show, and more about the program can be found by clicking “schools” from the website ....



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# Academic Start to Finish

A 10-week onsite program helping students use one simple tool for solution creating: SODAS.



SODAS is a rational problem solving instrument used as a guide for students. Problem-solving professionals act as allies in interactive, brief group settings. Youth who have early warning signs related to drop out are ideal for problem solving presentations. In a matter of weeks, hundreds of students can be served.

**The academic start to finish program provides students with a problem solving tool.** It is the ‘how to’ in solving any problem and a key part of what students learn. Students use and model the use of SODAS, in the [start to finish program](#).

**Problem solving meetings occur in the student centered perspective** – as a trained problem solving professional (PSP) facilitates. “Student Centered” means when the student calls something an advantage or disadvantage the problem solving professional doesn’t try to talk them out of it. The facilitator uses the tool – SODAS—without being condescending, authoritative, or even nurturing. The groups are often blunt, but professional, tasteful, and they’re fun!

**Youth are enlisted to participate and volunteers will lead** a second group! PSP’s encourage participation where students present problems and solutions that the PSP supports. In fact, students are regularly encouraged to “Talk if U want” The professional is trained to ask clarifying questions. PSP’s do not use directive or closed end questions (most of the time).

**The PSP is trained to walk through a process** – focusing less on the outcome and mainly on the way to move forward. Ultimately, the youth ‘calls it’ based on advantages and weights. If a youth is misinformed about something (not if the PSP disagrees), the problem solving professional might ask to offer something and see if the student supports it.

**Presentations are based on an age-old method.** One teacher said that SODAS reminded her of the “Benjamin Franklin” pro/con method. [SODAS was developed in 1973](#), specifically for adolescents. The method has been used in many different popu-

lations, with youth and adults. SODAS is simple and quick. SODAS is acronym and a favorite for students! It can be a tool that is helpful in many other areas – not only in deciding to stay/not stay in school. (Yes, some students do decide to quit – but even then, other alternatives are a factor to all SODAS). The start to finish program is new; it took shape in late 2014 in a school district public/private partnership, born out of the [School Counseling Program, operated since 2005](#).

**The delivery platform for is two-pronged: 1) it occurs in a group format, or 2) in an individual** format. The steps used by the PSP do not change; groups are more dynamic and somewhat complicated at times – but – vicarious problem solving takes place even for students who elect NOT to participate with the group. Groups can be followed up with individual problem solving meetings, and like much of start to finish – it is optional to do so. Individual meetings occur with parent consent whereas group meetings occur in the guest speaker platform.

**Because the program was developed to work in the school setting, it fits.** A group of 25 youth can complete two different SODAS sessions in 45-50 minutes. The approach is first lead by the professional and *then a youth is asked to lead* the group in a second SODAS. The professional facilitates, advocates and motivates; teachers are encouraged to observe. All offerings of the student (except matters of safety and certain legal risks) are encouraged and used in SODAS sessions.

**Start to Finish can be implemented and completed in a total of 8 to 10 days.** The days can be consecutive or they can be divided into weeks. In an 8 to 10 week time frame, hundreds of youth can be seen using existing class schedules (youth are not called out of the class making the logistics much easier to manage). As a part of the program, [a professional development seminar](#)

occurs for all high school personnel who themselves will observe and practice the method.

**Individual youth can self-identify and obtain parental consent for private SODAS sessions.** Voluntarily, individual youth bring consent forms asking for individual SODAS time. (some students prefer SODAS in the context of confidentiality). Usually the number of youth who self-identify is significantly fewer than the numbers served in groups. All groups and individuals are provided one day per week—for a time limited period.

**Licensed professionals can assist in referral identification.** The advantage to the subcontracted licensed professional is that individuals can be seen and screened for other risk factors involving academic success with a clinically based foundation.

**Students are identified using the early warning systems (EWS)** of the school district – where certain evidence based statistics help identify youth as ‘at risk for drop out,’ often before a youth knows they are even at risk. EWS is based on the Coordinated Early Intervening Services model for identifying youth who may need supportive interventions that are not as critical or severe as disability services.

**All contracts, forms and documentation needed for the program are provided** by the program and the onsite trainer. Standardized school district contracts are used, where the structure of the entire program is codified. Only the referral rosters are provided by the school / district. PSP professionals are trained using social technology and [standard form protocols](#) making implementation rather simple.