



*Information from:*

**Service Learning: A Strategy for Keeping Youth In School**  
**Institute for Global Education & Service Learning**  
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Includes:

- Individual, Family, School, & Community Factors
- More Significant Risk Factors
- Top Reasons Given by Dropouts for Leaving School
- Data, Facts, and Research-Based Hints about School Dropouts
- Student Engagement in Schools
- Parent's Relationship to the Dropout Issue
- Student Mobility
- Economic Impacts of Dropouts on Communities
- Economic and Social Impact of Dropping out of School



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Why Do Youth Drop Out?

# Factors Contributing To Students Dropping Out of School

## Individual Factors

Lack of future orientation  
Inadequate peer relationships  
Drug abuse  
Pregnancy  
Special learning needs  
Depression

## Family Factors

Poverty  
Low expectations  
Abuse  
Mobility of family  
Parent level of education  
Language and literacy levels

## School Factors

Lack of programs for challenged students  
No significant, interested adult  
Lack of alternatives for learning  
Lack of active learning instruction  
No individual learning plans  
Behavior and discipline issues  
Retention policies

## Community Factors

Lack of involvement with schools  
Lack of support for schools  
Non-caring environment  
Low expectations  
Violence  
Few recreational facilities



## Status Variables

Age, Gender  
Socioeconomic background  
Ethnicity  
Native Language  
Mobility  
Family Structure

## Alterable Variables

Grades, Retention  
Disruptive behavior  
Absenteeism  
School Policies, Climate  
Sense of belonging  
Attitude toward school  
Support in the home

# Significant Risk Factors for School Dropouts

## **Individual Background Characteristics**

- Has a disability.

## **Early Adult Responsibilities**

- High number of work hours
- Parenthood

## **Social Attitudes, Values and Behavior**

- High-risk peer group
- High risk social behavior
- Highly socially active outside of school

## **School Performance**

- Low achievement
- Retention/overall for grade

## **School Engagement**

- Poor attendance
- Low educational expectations
- Lack of effort
- low commitment to school
- No extracurricular participation.

## **School Behavior**

- Misbehavior
- Early aggression

## **Family Background Characteristics**

- Low socioeconomic status
- High family mobility
- Low education level of parents
- Large number of sibling
- Not living with both natural parents
- Family disruption

## **Family Engagement/Commitment to Education**

- Low educational expectations
- Sibling has dropped out
- Low contact with school
- Lack of conversations about school

National Dropout Prevention Center, Clemson University

## Top Reasons Given by Dropouts for Leaving School

<b>1980 High school and Beyond 10<sup>th</sup> grade cohort dropouts</b> (Ekstrom et al., 1986)	<b>1988 National Education Longitudinal Study 8<sup>th</sup> grade cohort dropouts</b> (Jordan et al., 1994)	<b>2005 Non representative Sample of Dropouts</b> (Bridgeland et al., 2006)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Didn't like school (33%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Didn't like school (51%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classes were not interesting (47%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor grades (33%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were failing school (44%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missed too many days and could not catch up (43%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offered a job and chose to work (19%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Couldn't get along with teachers (34%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spent time with people who were not interested in school (42%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting married (18%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Couldn't keep up with school work (31%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had too much freedom and not enough rules in my life [at school] (38%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could not get along with teachers (15%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Felt like they didn't belong at school (25%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was failing school (35%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had to help support family (11%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Couldn't work and go to school at the same time (18%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had to get a job and make money (32%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pregnancy (11%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had to get a job (17%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Became a parent (26%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expelled or suspended (10%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Couldn't get along with other students (16%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had to care for family member (22%)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was suspended too often (16%)</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I got married or planned to get married (12%)</li> </ul>	

# Data, Facts, and Research-Based Hints about School Dropouts

## I. Data and Facts

### Background Characteristics

#### Dropout Rate by Gender and Race/Ethnicity (2004)

Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Dropout Rate (2004)
Male	White, non-Hispanic	7.1%
	Black, non-Hispanic	13.5%
	Hispanic	28.5%
Female	White, non Hispanic	6.4%
	Black, non-Hispanic	10.2%
	Hispanic	18.5%

National Center for Education Statistics (2007)

- While, on average, approximately 70% of students graduate from high school with a regular diploma, students from historically disadvantaged minority groups have little more than a 50% chance of finishing high school with a diploma.
- If African-American and Latino students graduated from high school at the same rate as their white peers, approximately 310,000 additional minority students would graduate every year.

Greene & Winters (2006)

#### Dropout Rates of Immigrants (2004)

Regency Immigration	Dropout Rate (2004)
Hispanic and born outside the 50 States and DC	38.4%
Non-Hispanic and born outside the 50 state	6.5%
Hispanic and first generation	14.7%
Non-Hispanic and first generation	2.6%
Hispanic and second generation or higher	13.7%
Non-Hispanic and second generation or higher	8.0%

NOTE: The status dropout rate indicates the percentage of 16 through 24 years olds who are not enrolled in high school and who lack a high school credential. High school credentials include a high school diploma or equivalent credential such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

### Dropout Rate of 16 to 24 year-olds, by Family Income Quartile (2004)

Family Income Level	Dropout Rate (2004)
Lowest Quartile	17.7%
Middle low Quartile	12.5%
Middle High Quartile	8.7%
Highest Quartile	3.5%

National Center for Education Statistics (2007)

### Percentage Distribution of Dropouts, by Labor Force Status (2004)

Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labor Force
53%	14.3%	32.7%

National Center for education Statistics (2007)

NOTE: Employed category includes individuals who are employed but are not currently working.

### Percentage Distribution of Dropouts, by Years of School Completed (2004)

Less than 9 Years	9 Years	10 Years	11 or 12 Years
21.4%	15.9%	22.5%	40.3%

National Center for education Statistics (2007)

### Dropout Trends by School Districts

- 74% of Students in suburban districts graduate.
- 60% of students in urban districts graduate.
- Districts with a majority of minority students, high racial segregation, high poverty levels, or high economic, segregation have graduation rates approximately 20 % lower than districts with a majority of white students, low racial segregation, low poverty levels, or low economic segregation.

Education Week (2006)

### Status Dropout Rates by Region (2004)

National Center for Education Statistics (2006)

Region	Dropout Rate (2004)
Northeast	8.8%
Midwest	8.0%
South	11.4%
West	12.2%

NOTE: The status dropout rate indicates the percentage of 16 through 24 years olds who are not enrolled in high school and who lack a high school credential. High school credentials include a high school diploma or equivalent credential such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate

## Average Dropout Rates among Students with Disabilities

Disability Category	Average Dropout Percentage (2004-2005)
ALL	28%
SLD	27%
MR	24%
ED	48%
OHI	25%
AUT	11%

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2007)

NOTE: Dropped out is defined as the total who were enrolled at some point in the reporting year, were not enrolled at the end of the reporting year and didn't not exit through any of the other bases described. For the purposed of calculating dropout rates, OSEP counts students moved, not known to continue as dropouts.

### Promoting Power

- There are about 2,000 of the more than 20,000 high schools in the United States where graduation is not the norm.
- In these high schools, the senior class routinely shrinks to 60% or less, of the freshman class the entered four years earlier.
- These high schools are concentrated in about 50 large cities and 15 primarily southern and southwestern states.
  - Five southern states – Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, and Texas – collectively lead the nation in both total number and level of concentration of high schools with weak promoting power.
- High schools with weak promoting power are overwhelmingly attended by minority students.
  - While almost half of the nation's African-American students and nearly 49% of Latino students attend these "dropout factories," only 11% of white students do.
- Between 1993 and 2002, the number of high schools with weak promoting power increased by 75%.

NOTE: To calculate a high school's promoting power they divided the number of students enrolled in 12<sup>th</sup> grade by the number of 9<sup>th</sup> grades enrolled in high school 4 years earlier (if it was a 10-12 senior high school they divided the number of seniors by the number of sophomores 3 years earlier.)

Balfanz & Legters (2004)

# Student Engagement in Schools

## **Three Dimensions of Engagement:**

1. *Cognitive/ Intellectual/Academic Engagement* – engagement of the mind
2. *Social/ Behavioral/ Participatory Engagement*- engagement in the life of the school.
3. *Emotional Engagement*- engagement of the heart.

### ***And research shows...***

- Girls report being more engaged across all three dimensions than boys.
- Special education students report being less engaged in all three dimensions than students on other academic tracks.
- Students in general/regular education classes and student in career/vocational classes report approximately equal levels of engagement on all three dimensions, and fall between the other two tracks in terms of levels of engagement on all three dimensions.
- Students who are not eligible for free or reduced lunch programs report high levels of engagement on all three dimensions than students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch programs.

Yazzie-Mintz (2007)

## **Why Do Students Go To School?**

Here is how students responded to the question from most common response to least common:

- Because I want to get a degree and go to college: 73%
- Because of my peers/friends: 68%
- Because it's the law: 58%
- Because I want to acquire skills for the workplace: 47%
- Because of what I learn in classes: 39%
- Because I enjoy being in school: 34%
- To stay out of trouble: 24%
- Because of my teacher(s): 22%
- Because there is nothing else to do: 22%

Yazzie-Mintz (2007)

## **Have you ever been bored in high school?**

- Never: 2%
- Once or twice: 4%
- Once in a while: 27%
- Every day: 50 %
- Every class: 17 %

Yazzie-Mintz (2007)

**If you have been bored in class, why?**

- Material wasn't interesting: 75%
- Material wasn't relevant to me: 39%
- Work wasn't challenging enough: 32%
- No interaction with teacher: 31%
- Work was too difficult: 27%

Yazzie-Mintz (2007)

**Have you ever skipped school?**

50% of the respondents have skipped school either "once or twice" (34%) or "many times" (16%)

Yazzie-Mintz (2007)

**Have you ever considered dropping out of high school?**

- 22% of the respondents have considered dropping out of high school, either "once or twice" (15%) or "many times" (7%)
- Among those who have considered dropping out of high school, the most prevalent reasons given were:
  - "I didn't like the school" (73%)
  - "I didn't like the teachers" (61%) and
  - "I didn't see the value in the work I was being asked to do" (60%)
- Of particular note is that 24% of the students who have considered dropping out of high school – approximately one out of four of these students – indicated that a reason for considering this option was the "No adults in the school cared about me".

Yazzie-Mintz (2007)

**If you have thought about dropping out of high school, why?**

- Of the students who have considered dropping out of high school, the reasons they gave for considering this option are:
  - I didn't like the school" (73%)
  - I didn't like the teachers: (61%)
  - I didn't see the value in the work I was being asked to do: (60%)
  - Family issues: (42%)
  - I needed to work for money: (35%)
  - I was picked on or bullied: (28%)
  - No adults in the school cared about me: (24%)
  - The work was too easy: (19%)

Yazzie-Mintz (2007)

## **Adult Support**

Students' responses to the statement, "I feel supported by the following people," broke down as follows:

- Teachers: 81% agree or strongly agree, 19% disagree or strongly disagree
- Administrators: 60% agree or strongly agree, 40% disagree or strongly disagree
- Counselors: 73% agree or strongly agree, 27% disagree or strongly disagree
- Other adults (secretaries, custodians, etc): 61% agree or strongly agree, 39% disagree or strongly disagree

Yazzie-Mintz (2007)

## **School Environment**

- I feel safe in my school: 78% agree or strongly agree, 22% disagree or strongly disagree
- This school's rules are fair: 53% agree or strongly agree, 47% disagree or strongly disagree
- I am treated fairly in this school: 72% agree or strongly agree, 28% disagree or strongly disagree.

Yazzie-Mintz (2007)

# Parent's Relationship to the Dropout Issue

## After School Activities

Working parents are most at risk for their children's concerning after-school activities when:

- Their children spend more time unsupervised.
- They have more responsibility for child care in their households
- They work longer hours.
- They report greater concerns about behavioral/ social issues with a particular child.

Catalyst (2006)

## Parental Engagement in their Child's Schooling

1. Too many parents fail to receive clear and timely information about their children and their school's.
2. Poverty, limited English proficiency, and varying cultural expectations are among the biggest barriers to parental involvement.
3. Poor communication with parents hinders their ability to exercise NCLB's choice and supplemental education services options.
4. Creative, multi- faceted communication and engagement strategies can promote better parental, involvement in schools.
5. Parental involvement is not uniformly valued by school leaders as a key accountability strategy.

NOTE: These findings are based on research and interviews in eighteen school districts in six states, including dozens of interviews with education leaders and community-based organizations, and two dozen parent focus groups.

Appleseed (2006)

# Student Mobility

## Background

- 15% to 18% of school-aged children changed residence from the previous year.
- Nearly 12 million children changed their place of residence from 1991 to 2000
- Poor families move 50% to 100% more often than non-poor families.
- Five hundred thousand children attended more than 33 schools between first and third grade.
- Approximately 30% of children in low-income families change schools annually versus 8% of children in families well above poverty level.
- The turnover rate for students in urban schools ranged between 40% and 80% each year.
- Frequent school changes have been correlated with lower academic achievement

Popp (2004)

## Cause of Mobility

- Poverty
- Lack of affordable housing
- Low paying/seasonable jobs (migrant workers)
- Natural disasters (notable the hurricanes of 2005)
- Domestic violence and substance abuse (these conditions often are not apparent in rural/sparsely settle areas)
- Military reassignments and base closures
- Unstable foster care

Pierce & Ahearn (2007)

# Economic Impacts of Dropouts on Communities

## **Economy**

Each year's class of dropouts will cost the country over \$200 billion during their lifetimes in lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue (Catterall, 1985).

The estimated tax revenue loss from every male between the ages of 25 and 34 years of age who did not complete high school would be approximately \$944 billion, with cost increases to public welfare and crime at \$24 billion (Thorstensen, 2004).

Students from low-income families have a dropout rate of 10%; students from middle income families have a dropout rate of 5.2%, and 1.6% of students from high-income families dropout. (NCES, 2002).

A cost of \$10,038 for after-school programs produces benefits of \$89,000 to \$129,000 per participant (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003d).

Increasing minority students' participation in college to the same percentage as that of white students would create an additional \$231 billion in GDP and at least \$80 billion in new tax revenues (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).

## **Personal Income and Employment**

High school graduates, on the average, earn \$9,245 more per year than high school dropouts. (Employment Policy Foundation, 2002).

Between October 2001 and October 2002, about 400,000 persons dropped out of high school. The unemployment rate for this group was 29.8 %--almost 13 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for recent high school graduates who were not enrolled in college (United States Department of Labor, 2003).

A woman with a high school diploma earns a salary just above the poverty line for a family of three (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).

In 2002, the unemployment rate of blacks ages 20-24 with no high school diploma was 32%, compared to 6% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).

In today's workplace, only 40% of adults who dropped out of high school are employed, compared to 60% of adults who completed high school and 80% for those with a bachelor's degree (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).

Employment projections indicate that jobs requiring only a high school diploma will grow by just 9% by the year 2008, while those requiring a bachelor's degree will grow by 25% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).

## **Crime**

75% of America's state prison inmates are high school dropouts (Harlow, 2003).

59% of America's federal prison inmates did not complete high school (Harlow, 2003).

High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).

A 1% increase in high school graduation rates would save approximately \$1.4 billion in incarceration costs, or about \$2,100 per each male high school graduate (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).

A one-year increase in average education levels would reduce arrest rates by 11% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).

## **Literacy**

The cost to taxpayers of adult illiteracy is \$224 billion per year (National Reading Panel, 1999).

U.S. companies lose nearly \$40 billion annually because of illiteracy (National Reading Panel, 1999).

If literacy levels in the United States were the same as those in Sweden, the U.S. GDP would rise by approximately \$463 billion and tax revenues would increase by approximately \$162 billion (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).

For juveniles involved in quality reading instruction programs while in prison, recidivism was reduced by 20% or more (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).

## **Health**

Teen girls in the bottom 20% of basic reading and math skills are five times more likely to become mothers over a two-year high school period than teen girls in the top 20% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).

Male and female students with low academic achievement are twice as likely to become parents by their senior year of high school, compared to students with high academic achievement (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).

The U.S. death rate for those with fewer than 12 years of education is 2.5 times higher than the rate of those with 13 or more years of education (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).

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# Economic and Social Impact of Dropping Out of School

Mean income in 2005 by Educational Attainment of the Population 18 years and over.

	Not a Graduate	Graduate, including GED	Some college or no college degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
All Races, both sexes	\$17,299	\$26,933	\$30,657	\$36,645	\$52,671	\$66,754	112,902	\$91,370
White, both sexes	\$17,797	\$27,857	\$31,419	\$37,396	\$53,762	\$67,977	\$116,984	\$92,073
Black, Both sexes	\$14,356	\$21,868	\$26,449	\$31,934	\$46,268	\$56,253	\$94,077	\$74,249
Asian, both sexes	\$19,201	\$24,703	\$26,844	\$34,205	\$47,081	\$66,771	\$88,437	\$93,532
Hispanic Both sexes	\$17,456	\$24,528	\$27,810	\$33,069	\$45,536	\$61,765	\$75,194	\$97,886

U.S. Census Bureau (2006)

## Economic Losses

- Over his or her lifetime, a high school dropout earns, on average about \$260,000 less than a high school graduate and about \$1 million less than a college graduate. Almost 1.2 million student who should be graduating in 2006 will not leave school on time with a regular diploma, costing the nation more than \$312 billion lost wages, taxes and productivity over their lifetimes. Since over a million students fail to graduate each year, the loss is repeated annually.

Rouse (2005)

- Approximately 75% of state prison inmates did not complete high school. Projections she that a 5 % increase in the male high school graduation rate would save approximately \$4.9 billion in the related costs each year. J

Harlow (2003)

## Barriers to Employment

- About 90% or the fastest-growing jobs of the future will require some post secondary education.

Chao (2006)