



The Dropout Problem

The Problem

The alarm has sounded in American public education. Every nine seconds, a young person drops out of school. One-third of high school students and nearly half of all students of color fail to graduate on time. The racial gap encompasses both test scores and graduation rates, especially at the 4th- and 8th-grade levels.

Dropouts significantly diminish their chances of securing a good job, and, with it, a promising future. And the cumulative costs to society are staggering. Compared with high school graduates, dropouts are more likely to live in poverty, suffer poor health, be dependent on public assistance or enter the criminal justice system.

Putting the Problem in Perspective

- Over the course of a lifetime, a high school dropout earns, on average, about \$260,000 less than a high school graduate.
- Dropouts from the class of 2008 alone will cost the nation more than \$319 billion in lost wages over the course of their lifetimes.
- If the country's likely dropouts from the class of 2006 had graduated, the nation could have saved more than \$17 billion in Medicaid and expenditures for uninsured health care over the course of those young people's lifetimes.
- If high schools and colleges raise the graduation rates of black, Latino and Native American students to the levels of white students by 2020, the potential increase in personal income would add more than \$310 billion to the U.S. economy.
- Increasing the graduation rate and college matriculation of male students in the United States by just 5 percent could lead to combined savings and revenue of almost \$8 billion each year by reducing crime-related costs.

While there is no single reason why students drop out, research indicates that difficult transitions to high school, academic deficiencies and long-term disengagement linked to a variety of environmental factors are common risk factors. Students whose academic, social service and basic life needs are not met often succumb, even though they may be bright and capable of achieving in school.

A Solution to the Dropout Crisis

For more than 30 years, Communities In Schools has been helping students accomplish their goals through its model of integrated student services provided through a single point of contact – a school-based coordinator. We believe that all students can succeed in school if given the opportunity. We work inside the school system with superintendents, educators, graduation coaches and other personnel, and forge community partnerships that help remove barriers to learning. We are the country’s leading dropout prevention organization and the only one to both boost graduation and decrease dropout rates.

Communities In Schools focuses on the lowest performing schools and the students most vulnerable to dropping out. Of the nation’s high schools with the most dropouts and lowest promotion records, 80 percent are located in 15 states. Communities In Schools is active in all but one of these states. Students served by the organization are ethnically diverse, and live in economically disadvantaged communities; 96 percent of the children we serve qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, which is based on (though not equivalent to) federal poverty guidelines.

By making an early investment in students who are identified as potential dropouts, Communities In Schools increases the likelihood that these young people will make positive life choices, succeed academically, and finish school prepared to achieve in life.

References

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Communities In Schools surrounds students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. Through a school-based coordinator, Communities In Schools connects students and their families to critical community resources tailored to local needs. Working in more than 3,400 schools in the most challenged communities, in 25 states and the District of Columbia, Communities In Schools serves nearly 1.3 million young people and their families. It has become the nation's leading dropout prevention organization, and the only one proven to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates.