

# The severe after effects of dropping out of high school



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Education is a powerful tool. It prepares students to be invaluable contributors to society. Without a high school education, young people are less likely to succeed academically, socially, and professionally. Sadly, millions of young people leave school without completing their minimum education requirements and thus do not graduate with a high school diploma. As a result, many adolescents experience the devastating aftereffects of their regrettable decision. Students who drop out of high school are more likely to: earn less than those who graduate, be unemployed, be on public assistance, and end up in prison (ERIC).

Dropping out of high school culminates a long-term process of disengagement from school and has profound social and economic consequences for students, their families, their communities, and the entire nation (ERIC). America is facing a crisis of epidemic proportions with such a high percentage of students who do not complete their high school education. Dropping out of high school is a major life event that severely impacts students' chances for subsequent educational and occupational opportunities (NCES). Recent NCES reports indicate that nationally about one-third of all students who enter high school do not graduate on time, if ever. Approximately 7, 000 students drop out of high school daily, which translates to one in three students. Annually, that amounts to more than six million students dropping out of high schools across the nation. The U. S. Department of Education has called it an epidemic.

The children are the future of America and should be our greatest resource. All children deserve an education that prepares them to be productive members of society who perform their civic and economic duties. As such,  
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we should ensure they have every opportunity to succeed. Every individual in the country, state, city or municipality will reap the benefits of an educated citizenry. Therefore, everyone's best interest would be served by ensuring that all children stay in school and receive an adequate education.

Efforts towards dropout prevention will remediate students leaving high school prior to graduation. Prevention measures will serve these individuals, their school, their community, and the nation at large. This policy memo will provide an overview on the current state of the high school dropout problem nationwide and in Florida, particularly, Miami-Dade County. I will discuss (1) the number of school dropouts, (2) the reasons related to youth dropping out of school, (3) the consequences of dropping out and not finishing high school, and (4) dropout prevention programs and techniques. For this overview, I researched the Florida Department of Education summary information on graduation and dropout rates as well as proven dropout prevention and intervention programs and techniques.

## **BACKGROUND**

The vast majority of students who fail to complete high school with their respective graduating class is comprised primarily of Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans. Many of these students abandon school within two years of their projected graduation date. This tragic cycle has not substantially improved during the past few decades during which education reform has been high on the public agenda. During this time, as politicians and other elected officials purport to work at mitigating the high percentage of dropouts, the general public has been almost entirely unaware of the

severity of the dropout problem due to inaccurate and inconsistent data. The consequences remain tragic.

Students who drop out face a lifetime of consequences for this grave decision. Dropouts are more likely than their graduating peers to be: unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, incarcerated, of poor health, and single parents of children who drop out from high school themselves perpetuating this vicious cycle. Our local communities, as with the state and the nation, also suffer from this epidemic due to the loss of productive workers, loss of taxable wage base, and higher costs associated with increased percentages of incarceration, greater use of emergency health care services, and overwhelming reliance on social services. Despite repeated declarations by educators, politicians, and elected officials about the importance of addressing the dropout situation, the problem becomes more calamitous with every passing year.

## **No Child Left Behind**

When President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) into law on January 8, 2002, he stated, “ Now is the time to ensure that every child learns.” NCLB required states to use graduation rates to measure how well students were being educated. States were required to report to the federal government how well they met NCLB goals. Originally designed as an attempt by the federal government to hold the nation’s schools accountable for achieving high levels of educational proficiency for all students, NCLB has been adapted by the states in ways that fail to promote its objectives. Many states tended to manufacture basic data on graduation rates to comply with NCLB. Regrettably, NCLB placed excessive emphasis on <https://assignbuster.com/the-severe-after-effects-of-dropping-out-of-high-school/>

solitary assessments that failed to assist educators improve their teaching. Needless to say, NCLB was unsuccessful in its attempt to educate students.

## **The Dropout Crisis**

For most citizens, graduating from high school is the minimum standard of achievement needed for a successful future. A high school diploma can position a graduate to embark on a variety of pathways to personal, career, and social success that are generally not available to high school dropouts. The plight of the high school dropouts is extremely serious. By dropping out, these individuals considerably lessen their chances to secure a good profession. “ Without a diploma, dropouts face increasingly bleak career prospects tied largely to entry-level employment. They also may remain far behind in a technology-driven age where career adaptability is not simply a plus, but a requirement” (NDPC/N).

Graduation rates are a vital indication of how schools are performing. Recently, those rates have been meticulously examined, divulging the extent of the tragedy in America’s high schools. For decades, misleading or erroneous graduation rates were published by schools and school districts. Consequently, the American public knew little of the magnitude of the problems faced by several of the nation’s high schools. Many factors contribute to students dropping out of school, including poverty, low literacy and achievement levels, parenting responsibilities, and the need to immediately earn money through employment so that they can contribute financially to their impoverished families.

## **Why Do Students Drop Out?**

While there is no single reason for why students drop out, research indicates that difficult transitions to high school, deficient basic skills, and a lack of engagement all serve as prominent barriers to graduation.

Low attendance or failing grades are specific risk factors.

Many students discover that their academic skills are insufficient for high school-level work and repeat ninth grade.

Many students are not given the extra support they need to make a successful transition to high school and are lost in ninth grade.

Lack of both academic and social engagement are integral components of dropping out

Overall, far too many students are not graduating on time with a regular diploma; low-income students and minority students fare the worst in the dropout epidemic (Alliance for Excellent Education). More than half of the students who do not graduate on time are minorities. The graduation rate among minorities is as much as twenty-five percentage points below their white peers.

## **Importance of not dropping out**

The high incidence of students dropping out poses a serious problem for the county, state, and country. Likewise, it creates deleterious consequences for the individual dropout. Consequences of dropping out identified by the General Accounting Office (GAO) include the following:

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As the pool of dropouts continues to grow, employment opportunities for them are more limited.

The rate of engagement in high-risk behaviors such as premature sexual activity, early pregnancy, delinquency, crime, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide has been found to be significantly higher among dropouts.

Dropouts are more likely than other citizens to draw on welfare and other social programs throughout their lives.

Income differences between dropouts and other citizens can be expected to widen as the economy evolves.

A growth of unskilled laborers in low-wage jobs will increase.

As summarized by the GAO, the social costs of the dropout problem include an underskilled labor force, lower productivity, lost taxes, and increased public assistance and crime.

## **Identifying Social Issues**

The Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) suggests a focused approach must be undertaken with the purpose of successfully combating the problem of adolescents dropping out of high school. Particularly, this would entail identifying pronounced social indicators that are interrelated with the county's dropout problem. These characteristics help determine individuals who require the most intervention and accordingly implement programs committed to keeping them in school. According to CBER, three

factors should be considered. Firstly, social groupings of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status pictures of at-risk youths emerge. Hispanics, Native Americans, and African-Americans had the highest dropout rates in the state and were more likely of dropping out. Secondly, problematic social environments and inappropriate behavior can be used in identifying at-risk youth. Juvenile delinquency and behavioral problems in school are indicators of potential dropouts. Lastly, academic performance is a key component in identifying potential dropouts. Grade retention and its effect on self-esteem can be detrimental.

## **DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS & STRATEGIES**

Many of the proposed solutions recommended to combat the problem of high school dropouts focus on dealing with the social issues that teenagers encounter on a daily basis. The solutions heavily target “ at-risk” youth, making sure they have the necessary tools and guidance to successfully complete their education. The following is a more sketchy examination of some of the most widely proposed programs. Information is comprised of data from Center for Business and Economic Research.

### **Intervention at an Early Age**

The Oregon School Board Association advocates working with children at a young age to teach the importance of staying in school. Schools in Oregon have led the way in the development of effective programs for their students. One of the programs they have pioneered begins in the third grade.



## **The Importance of School Environment**

Building strong and stable school environments is a necessary factor in the development of specific programs for children who need specialized attention. It is important to start with the essential elements of a sound school environment, beginning with the organization of the administration and ending with the overall school culture.

## **Alternative Education Programs**

There are some students for whom “ traditional” high schools simply do not work. For example, for teenagers who need to work to support themselves or their family, or for young girls facing pregnancy, going to school during the day may simply not be feasible. Thus, one idea that has been introduced is for school districts to offer alternative high schools.

## **Dropout Prevention Programs**

As mandated by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), dropout prevention programs in Florida were created to:

Provide families, communities, and school districts with strategies and resources to continue increasing the number of students who graduate from Florida’s schools.

Provide school districts with alternative strategies, such as unique teaching techniques, learning activities, and assessment procedures.

Provide positive options for building and strengthening curriculums in order to prevent students from dropping out of school.

“ Dropout prevention is a complicated endeavor and must involve a wide range of services to tackle a wide range of problems. There are multiple pathways to dropping out of school, and therefore, any dropout prevention program should have a multi-faceted strategy to serve a wide range of students who are at-risk of dropping out.” (ICF and NDPC/N).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The key to early intervention is at birth to five years. This is a critical point in the lives of children in which to foster a lifelong love of learning, respect for academia, and confidence in their academic abilities. In doing so, by definition requires the involvement of parents. For parents who rely heavily on social services, there should be a mandate that they volunteer a certain number of hours in the child’s school and classroom and participate in parenting classes. Studies have shown that birth to five-year-old students who have parents involved in their education and learning process fare better in their early education, which leads to better overall success in school.

With this age group, critical thinking, enhancement of motor skills, cognitive learning, and experiential learning are all crucial to establishing a broad foundation for lifelong academic excellence. Continued parental involvement coupled with adequately staffed and funded schools, and teachers who are engaged and engaging students, all contribute towards long-term success in school.

My recommendation is a program that provides students at an early age, similar to Oregon’s initiative with the necessary tools to foster academic

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achievement as well as personal and social growth. The program would provide tutoring, homework support, mentoring activities, extended and individual classroom learning, parental involvement, and community support. The main goals of the program, increasing the graduation rate, reducing the number of high school dropouts, and targeting at-risk youth most likely to drop out; will be accomplished. Today's high school needs greater innovation, increased student engagement, and a rich and rigorous curriculum that is more educationally meaningful for students (ASCD).

## **IMPLEMENTATION BENEFITS**

The California Dropout Research Project declares: " Education affords benefits to both individuals and society. Individuals with more education earn higher incomes, are healthier, are less likely to be involved in criminal activities, and are less likely to be on welfare. Additionally, better-educated persons pay more in taxes and enable reductions in government spending on health, crime, and welfare." Therefore, the state and citizens should make certain that all children graduate and finish school with an adequate education. Moving even just one student from dropout status to graduate status will make positive contributions to the economy.

Implementation of the proposed policy will be beneficial to Miami-Dade County and the entire State of Florida. It will allow youngsters to successfully learn, stay in school and prepare for life. It will enable educators and parents to be on alert and identify potential signs of behavior that would indicate the student is in danger of dropping out of school. The assistance of parents, teachers, community leaders, and elected officials; will enable students to improve their grades, attendance, and behavior overall.

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This strategy will instill the importance of education and the benefits of obtaining a high school diploma. A high school education includes the knowledge and skills required to improve an individual's quality of life, to become a more productive citizen, and to improve their income-earning potential. Reduction of the number of local students who fail to graduate on time would exponentially increase economic factors such as individual earnings, spending and investment, tax revenue, and human capital.

## **CONCLUSION**

Education is an investment in human capital. It provides the foundation for successful academic study, for lifelong learning, and for carrying out the duties of citizenship. Our high school students face significant challenges. Many teenagers drop out of school every year. Reasons for students dropping out are numerous and oftentimes complex. The alarming dropout rates that sentence young people to joblessness and poverty must be turned around. Retaining students is an enormous problem for many schools; however, students must be convinced to stay in school and learn skills that will allow them to compete and contribute to our economy. Without a high school diploma, young people are less likely to succeed in the workforce. Solving the dropout epidemic should result in a significant number of actual dropouts, a skilled workforce, and an improved economy.

The State of Florida, specifically Miami-Dade County, has a serious problem to confront within its public-education system. Florida has a bleak record pertaining to dropout prevention efforts. Therefore, it is imperative that citizens acquaint themselves with the issues associated with high school dropouts in order to effectively address the problem. Sometimes it is difficult

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to identify young people who need assistance. However, social factors can be used to identify at-risk youth. Once identified, proven and successful programs used around the country that aim at getting children through school, can be implemented. Certainly, it is up to the citizenry of the state to prevent their children from leaving high school.

#### RELATION TO PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The incorporation of results-based accountability, as well as, merit pay and performance bonuses that school districts across the nation are gradually adopting, reflects NPM in public education. A reform initiative, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), is a prime example of New Public Management (NPM) concept being applied to education. NCLB illustrates an attempt by policymakers to employ techniques of NPM and to impose more tightly coupled policy restrictions on the educational system. These techniques are applied to the management and operation of schools.

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