

The cost of education

Education



Joey Goodstudent English 101, Section Causal Argument Essay February 16, 2009 The Real Cost of Education It was David Henry Thoreau who said, " The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it. " He graduated from Harvard in 1837, but not with a diploma. He explains, " they have been foolish enough to put at the end of all this earnest the old joke of a diploma. " Thoreau understood that the piece of parchment handed out at commencement means nothing more than the hard work, studying, and education that came before it.

Today, those values are lost, and only 59% of Arizona high school students graduate. This number reflects changes in society, problems in schools, and student's personal reasoning. Society today demands a degree, not to get ahead, but just to keep up. An article published in the July 17, 2008 Wall Street Journal titled " The Declining Value of your College Degree " states that " College-educated workers are more plentiful, more commoditized and more subject to the downsizings that used to be the purview of blue-collar workers only.

What employers want from workers nowadays is more narrow, more abstract and less easily learned in college. " A phrase like this is very discouraging to a high schooler. When the prospect of a brighter future is taken from the table, the immediate response is " why try? " This attitude gives way to a sense of hopelessness and discouragement. A study by Civic Enterprises shows that 69% of dropouts said that they were not motivated to work hard. The growing cost of living coupled with the independence of today's youth creates a need to work, and earn money.

In society today, children are growing up much faster. A report by the Guttmacher Institute placed Arizona as the state having the second most pregnancies in women aged 15-19. We fell just 9 teen pregnancies shy of first, at 104. With the average annual cost of raising a child at \$17, 151, it's practically impossible to support a family and remain in school. This causes both parents of the child to drop out; with both either working all the time or taking turns watching the child as the other works.

Problems with the schools are also large contributing factors in the decision to drop out. High Schools often have stark attendance policies that step on the toes of students otherwise willing and able to complete high school. When a student misses a set number of class periods they're simply audited. The student is not given a chance to catch up, or to learn what they've missed, but are assumed to be unable to finish the course. This notion runs contradictory to Arizona's standardized testing, which suggests that if a child can pass a test, they've learned what's necessary.

The audited students are not given the chance to be tested, and show that they've learned the necessary material despite absences. A study by Civic Enterprises shows that 47% of students gave the reason "classes are uninteresting" as one of their motivations for dropping out. Uninteresting classes comes as a result of a strict curriculum to support standardized testing, and placing high value on practical subjects such as math and language, while stigmatizing creative subjects like art, drama, and dance, which would hold the attention of students otherwise bored.

Teachers today are forced to stick to strict curriculums to ensure that students can pass a test at the end of the class. This often limits learning techniques considered to be more interesting than others, such as working in a group on a project, or having a class-wide discussion. These actions are replaced with long, prepared lectures and quizzes. Knowledge is lost on students, who sit in class bored. Education is increasingly geared towards practicality, and academic ability. Schools will teach daily mathematics and languages classes, and only offer art or music classes a fraction of that time.

Students become bored with the subjects and have no motivation to continue attending school. If schools were to offer more fine arts students would soon gain fascination, and in turn be more interested and motivated to go to school. Class sizes in schools are also a problem, as a large class size will limit the one-on-one time student's need with their instructor to fully understand what being taught. Often when a class is too large students are unable to ask questions because the instructor is busy help other students, or grading hundreds of assignments.

When the class size is smaller, an instructor can get to know particular students weaknesses and help them develop those areas. In this way, a small class size fosters a stronger education, and in turn, happier students who enjoy learning. Students coming to high school from junior high are faced with a completely different social situation. Cliques and groups form to exclude people, and this causes self-esteem issues. Finding friends in this new situation can be tough for students, and feeling like an outcast at school will cause students to not want to be there.

Belonging to a group will increase the chances of that students attending school. Conversely, some students get so caught up in the social aspect of high school and being a 'teen' that they let their attendance slip, preferring to go out to lunch or hang out with friends over going to school. Eventually, school takes the back seat to their sociability and they drop out. Peer pressure also limits those who earnestly want to succeed, but are not strong academically.

Super-seniors will come back to school for another year instead of giving up, only to be ridiculed and called stupid by other students. They soon believe the ridicule and drop out. The true cost of education is the life we exchange for it. It could be at work, struggling to support ourselves and go to school. It could be at home studying for an upcoming exam, It could be in the classroom trying to pay attention, or with fellow students, trying to make friends. With time will come the consequence of these high drop out rates. Perhaps then we'll take action and try to stop it.