

School Counseling: Turning Potential Dropouts Toward a College Going Culture

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As school dropout rates continue to increase, the economic, social and political impact ripples into all aspects of society- across the nation and across the world. Most states have enacted policies to combat the alarming rates at which students fail to complete high school.

Overview

- The Legal Issues
- Dropout Numbers
- Prevention
 - Research
 - Strategies
- Supporting all Students
- Recommendations
- A Light at the End of the Tunnel/ Sharing Experiences/ Final Thoughts
- Questions

Legal Issues

Dropout: A student, who attends Grade 7-12 in a public school in a particular school year, does not return the following fall, is not expelled, and does not: graduate, receive a GED, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2010)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

With the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act*, as amended, Title I, Part **H** Section 1802, The high school graduate initiate, also known as school dropout prevention programs, provides for school dropout prevention and reentry and to raise academic achievement levels by providing grants that —

- **Challenge all children to attain their highest academic potential; and**
- **Ensure that all students have substantial and ongoing opportunities to attain their highest academic potential through school wide programs proven effective in school dropout prevention and reentry.**

Texas Laws: Attendance and Completion

- Texas SB186, 78th Legislature, directed districts to collect data consistent with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) dropout definition beginning in 2005-06. The Completion rates for 2011 are Academically Acceptable- 75 percent, Recognized-85 percent, and Exemplary- 95 percent.
- Texas House Bill (HB) 3, 81st Legislative Session, defined certain exclusions that the agency must make when calculating dropout and completion rates for state accreditation and state performance ratings. The exclusions are previous dropouts; ADA ineligible students; court-ordered GEDs, not earned; incarcerated adults in state jails or federal penitentiaries not served by Texas public schools; and students whose initial enrollment in U.S. schools was in grades 7-12 as unschooled refugees and asylees.

Compulsory Attendance

In Texas, students are required to attend school from the age of six through the age of 17, although they may be withdrawn with parent/guardian permission at the age of 16.

§25.085 (Compulsory Attendance) Compulsory attendance applies to students who are at least six years old as of September 1 of the applicable school year. The law requires a student to attend public school until the student's 18th birthday, unless the student is exempt under §25.086.

Alarming Trend

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) recently reported an increase in the number of students moving to home school. There is some concern from TEA that these numbers do not represent students actually enrolled in home school, but instead signing paperwork to withdraw from Texas school districts, to avoid being labeled as drop outs or to avoid truancy filings.

This practice only masks the underlying issues that lead to dropping out.

Dropout Numbers

School counselors indentify students at-risk of not completing high school and work with these students to develop educational plans for their futures.

True or False?

- 1.2 million students drop out of high school every year, or one every 26 seconds.
- Graduation rates are between 68 and 75 percent.
- Nearly one-third of all public high school students do not graduate with their class.
- The dropout epidemic disproportionately affects young people who are low-income, children of single parents, or certain minorities.
- Nearly one-half of all African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans in public school will not graduate with their class.

- Approximately 15 percent of high schools in America produce close to half of the nation's dropouts and over two-thirds of its minority dropouts.
- In nearly 2,000 high schools in the U.S., 40 percent of typical freshman class students drop out by their senior year.
- Graduation rates have remained largely unchanged over the last 30 years.
- Among developed countries, the U.S. ranks 18th in high school graduation rates and 15th in college graduation rates.

All True!

Balfanz, J., Fox, J. H., Bridgeland, J. M. & McNaught, M. (2009)

For the past ten years, roughly one third of all high school students have not graduated. This has led to 1.3 million students failing to graduate in 2010 alone. On average, 34% of males and 27.1% of females do not graduate. Phi Delta Kappa (2011) reports the following dropout rates:

<u>Racial/Ethnic Group</u>	<u>2007 Dropout Rate</u>
Asian-American	19.3%
Black	46.3%
Hispanic	44.5%
Native American	49.3%
White	23.4% (p. 15)

Video <http://youtu.be/Fihzt1NBkP8>

Cost of Dropping Out

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2009) released a report on the cost to the nation's economy of high school dropouts. The average high school graduate earns over \$9,000 a year more than a high school dropout; while those students earning a bachelor's degree earn over \$35,000 a year more. For the class of 2009, if the 1.3 million students that dropped out of high school had earned their diplomas, they would have increased the national economy by \$335 billion over the course of their careers, with close to \$35 billion added to the Texas economy.

Prevention

Numerous programs exist to help schools and counselors in addressing the needs of these at-risk students. Most of these programs call for schools to provide mentorship opportunities for students, real-world learning opportunities, and involvement of the entire community.

Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J. J. & Morison, K.B. (2006) list several surprising statistics about high school dropouts:

- 88% were passing when they dropped out.
- 58% dropped out with two years or less to complete their degrees.
- 81% recognized the importance of earning a high school diploma.
- 74% admitted that they would stay in school if allowed to do it over.

In interviews and conversations with dropouts, the authors identify five core reasons for dropping out:

- **Not interested in classes**
- **Could not catch up from too many missed days**
- Time spent with people not interested in school
- Too much freedom in personal life
- **Failing school**

Student Concern

- **Not interested in classes**
- **Could not catch up from too many missed days**
- Time spent with people not interested in school
- Too much freedom in personal life
- **Failing school**

Interventions

- More Engaging Lessons
- Truancy Options/Night School/Credit Recovery
- School Activity Participation
- Adult Mentors
- Credit Recovery

Responses To Dropout

International, National, State, Local

International Response to Dropout Prevention

Hoffman (2011) explores the reactions of Norway, The Netherlands, and Australia to address the issue. Each nation provides additional support for students in the form of vocational education and training (VET), to better prepare all students for a place in the workforce. One additional strategy involves tying eligibility for income support to the completion of school programs or work training. The Netherlands has introduced a compulsory work and learning program, a system to track student participation, and programs to prevent early leaving while at the secondary level. In Norway, students have the right to three years of free upper level education and each county provides individualized counseling for all students ages 16-21 outside of education or the workforce. The Australian government has sought to decrease their 25 percent dropout rate, especially among the aboriginal population. One program requires all students to attend school through Year 10, and fulltime involvement in education, employment or training through the age of 17.

NCLB

- Several Provisions for Dropout Recovery
- Sanctions on States that Fail to Meet Standards
 - Less Money for Schools in most Critical Need?
- Up for Reauthorization
 - **Make Sure Your Voice is Heard!**

State of Texas Response

- In Texas, students served by one school district, must be accounted for the following fall, either through district records or through TEA. All student records are processed through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) using various leaver codes.
- To combat this increase in dropout rates and to comply with all standards of NCLB, Texas computes completion rates into school accountability and rating systems.
- Dropout Prevention Addressed in the Texas Comprehensive Guidance Program.

The Texas Comprehensive, Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program Model outlines four specific components that relate to dropout prevention:

Guidance Curriculum: Self-confidence development, motivation to achieve, decision-making, goal-setting, planning, problem-solving skills, and responsible behavior.

Responsive Services: Academic success, school dropouts, attendance, school attitudes and behaviors, career indecision, and college choice.

Individual Planning: Set challenging educational, career, and personal-social goals that are based on self-knowledge and information about school, the world of work, and their society.

System Support: Assist in records maintenance of students, and document student progress (TEA, 2004).

A Key Issue

School guidance counselors often have caseloads far exceeding the recommendation of one counselor for every 350 students(Texas), and thus are unable to meet the needs of all of their students. While the American School Counseling Association continues to push for ratios of one counselor to every 250 students, the current national average is one to 460 students, with some states having student caseloads of 700 students, or even 1,000 in California. **With such large case loads and large number of non-counseling duties, students often report feeling that they have received little guidance support** and are often “just another face in the crowd” (Public Agenda, p. 6).

The Region 10 Texas Educational Service Center offers the following four suggestions for all schools in the North Texas area:

- Ease credit recovery
- Promote school attendance
- Offer social – emotional support
- Weaken negative influences

(Region 10, n.d.)

McKinney ISD

- Campus Level Recovery Teams
 - Identify and Recover Students At-Risk
- Response to Intervention (RtI)
 - K-12
- **Counseling**
 - Why Try?
 - Credit Recovery Options
 - eHigh

eHigh

- On-Line Curriculum (APEX)
 - Student may combine on-line courses with face to face classroom instruction for a hybrid education to best meet their needs.
- Credit Recovery with Teacher Support
 - Credit Recovery
 - Acceleration
 - Attendance Committee
 - State Testing Tutoring/Support
- Over 300 courses completed at MHS (3/1/2012)
 - 792 Completed Courses District wide (3/1/2012)
 - 16 District Wide Graduates
 - 5 Completers (Awaiting final state testing scores/additional credits)

Research

What Drives Our Interventions?

Research Strategies

Categories of Interventions:

- ❑ Diagnostics for identifying potential dropouts.
- ❑ Targeted intervention that are intensive to the specific social, academic and personal lives of the student.
- ❑ School wide reforms to create a more engaging school climate and lower school dropout rates.

Balfanz, J., Fox, J. H., Bridgeland, J. M. & McNaught, M. (2009) suggest three major strategies:

- Establish early warning.
- Creating a multi-tiered response.
- Multiple success pathways for students and ways for older students to recover credit.

Dynarski, M., Clarke, L., Cobb, B., Finn, J., Rumberger, R., and Smink, J. (2008)

- Utilize data systems that support a realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out (Diagnostic).
- Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out (Targeted intervention).
- Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance (Targeted intervention).
- Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills (Targeted intervention).
- Personalize the learning environment and instructional process (School wide intervention).
- Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school (School wide intervention).

Perceptions of Chicano/Latino Students Who Have Dropped Out of School

Avilés, R., Guerrero, M., Howarth, H. & Thomas, G. (1999)

Major Theme: Attendance and Credits.

The majority of focus group participants reported that most of the Chicano/Latino students who drop out do so because of difficulty in obtaining the credits necessary for graduation. Insufficient credits were not reported to be a result of failing grades but a consequence of days missed from school, incomplete make-up work from days missed, and poor school–home communication (p. 467).

Continued...

Major Theme: Participation in school activities.

Reports suggested that there were perceived barriers to participation in school activities. The barriers were both economic and racial. The cost of participating in some activities or simply owning the “correct” clothes kept many individuals away from school activities and, in some cases, from regular school attendance. Other group members suggested that Chicano/Latino students were not encouraged, and very often discouraged, from participating in sports, dance line (i.e. a cocurricular after school activity involving physically demanding choreographed dance routines), and other extracurricular activities (p. 468).

Extracurricular activities contribute to educational success and Chicano/Latino students participate less than other students in school extracurricular activities (De La Rosa & Maw, 1990).

Student Engagement Lowers Risk of Dropout

- School Involvement
- Relationships with School Faculty
 - Meaningful, Supportive Mentorships
 - Provide Rigor to Challenge Students
- Career Technical Education (CTE)
 - Students have opportunity to leave school with a career or trade
 - Hands-On Learning
- Extracurricular Involvement

Supporting All Students

Multiple Options for All Students

What Makes Some Students Want Out?

- Home Life
 - Abuse/Neglect
 - Care for Other Family Members
 - Death of Family Member / Caregiver
 - Foster Care
- Pregnancy / Have Small Children
- Support Themselves / Family
- Legal Trouble
- Bullied
 - LGBT Students Express Fear of Being Harmed at School
- Passing All Classes, But not State Required Exit Exams

Video: What Makes Someone Drop Out of HS

<http://youtu.be/d4Vg5TXFG7c>

Students In Need of Support

- At-Risk
 - See State Indicators (Texas example)
- Credit Deficient
- Undocumented
- Students Needing Resources
 - Paying for College
 - Meeting Basic Needs

Texas At-Risk Indicators

- (1) was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years;
- (2) if the student is in grade 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12, did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester;
- (3) did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student under Subchapter B, Chapter 39, and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110 percent of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument;
- (4) if the student is in prekindergarten, kindergarten, or grade 1, 2, or 3, did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered during the current school year;
- (5) is pregnant or is a parent;

At-Risk (cont...)

- (6) has been placed in an alternative education program in accordance with Section 37.006 during the preceding or current school year;
- (7) has been expelled in accordance with Section 37.007 during the preceding or current school year;
- (8) is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release;
- (9) was previously reported through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to have dropped out of school;
- (10) is a student of limited English proficiency, as defined by Section 29.052;
- (11) is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official;

At-Risk (cont...)

- (12) is homeless, as defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 11302, and its subsequent amendments; or
- (13) resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.

Often, when a student identified as At-Risk, they remain so until they graduate.

Early Identification of At-Risk is Key

- 1. low grade point average in the eighth grade (GPA)
- 2. suspended students (SUSPD)
- 3. low SES (SES)
- 4. number of days late to school without excuse (LATE)
- 5. number of days absent from school (ABSENT)
- 6. positive perception of teacher (TEACHR)
- 7. number of household members (HHSIZE)
- 8. highest education attainment of mother was high
- 9. school or less (HGCPRM)
- 10. gender of youth (GENDER)
- 11. threat of being hurt in school (THREAT)
- 12. number of fights at school (FIGHT)
- 13. behavioral and emotional problems (BEHAV)
- 14. total number of schools attended (SCHATT)
- 15. use of school teacher/counselor versus family members as resource for personal problems (PROB1)
- 16. use of school friends versus family members as resource for personal problems (PROB2)
- 17. percentage of peers planning to go to college (PCOLL)
- 18. mother's permissiveness (MPERM),
- 19. first sexual experience occurred at age 15 or below (SEX)
- 20. optimistic about future (OPTIM)

Counseling Implications

- Low GPA is not the only major factor leading to dropping out of school. Forty three percent of low-GPA students successfully completed high school.
- Students had a high possibility of dropping out of school, particularly when they had high absenteeism or a pessimistic outlook about the future.
- Counselors may need to use individual and group counseling with students who exhibit high absenteeism to identify their attendance patterns and the factors contributing to their absence (p. 201).

Continued...

- It is also important for counselors to empower students who have a low GPA. This can be accomplished by helping students develop a successful outlook about the future that will lead to graduation from high school.
- These results suggest the need for an emphasis on career counseling before the eighth grade. Such counseling could focus on the student's level of aspiration and might emphasize the importance of believing in oneself as a person who can achieve (p. 201).
- Across the three categorical at-risk models studied, an **optimistic view about the future was found to be the most critical factor in decreasing the school dropout rate** for all three types of at-risk students (p. 202).

Creating Optimism About The Future

- Information is Key
 - Remove Barriers
 - Language (Both Second Language and “College Language”)
 - Financial
 - Transportation
 - Fear
 - First in Family
- Provide Options
 - College and Career Guidance
 - Not all College has to be 4 Year Schools
 - Provide for Immediate Needs
- Create A College Going Culture

Creating College Culture on Campus

- *College Weeks*
- *Teacher Door Decorating (College)*
- *College Sweatshirt Days*
- *College Material Throughout School*
- **Access to College/Career Information**
- **Access to Scholarship/Financial Aid Information**
- **Individual and Group Counseling Sessions of Career/College Readiness**
- **Active Counseling Resources (Website/Newsletter)**

Toward a College Going Culture

- Help Students Create a Path for Their Future
 - Set Goals
 - Why Try?
 - Goal Setting Curriculums (Life Plan)
 - Plan to Attain Them
 - Reality Check
 - My College Quick Start
- Many Roads can Lead to Post-Secondary Education
 - Community College
 - Trade School
 - Military (Now requires HS Diploma)
- There are Ways to Pay for the Cost of College

Reality Check

- Sponsored by Texas Workforce Commission
- Allows students to Look at Cost of Living Expenses, and Match Careers

The Reality Check website interface is shown in four screenshots. The top-left screenshot shows the main landing page with the heading "Reality Check" and a message: "After High School you will need to pay for housing, transportation, clothes... Find out how much money you will need and which career will pay for all your needs." It includes an "Enter Site" section with "Text-Only Version", "Non-Flash Version", and "Flash Version" options, and is brought to you by "TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI)".

The top-right screenshot shows the "Housing" section with a message: "Another part of being an adult is providing your own housing. You should know how much money you will spend each month, select one of the different options." It features a red path leading through various housing options: "Basic Apt.", "Average Apt.", "Luxury Apt.", "House", and "Live at Home".

The bottom-left screenshot shows the "Total Expenses" section for Austin. It lists monthly expenses and provides a summary of annual costs.

Your Monthly Expenses	
Housing	\$962.00
Utilities	\$290.00
Food	\$230.00
Transportation	\$845.00
Clothes	\$200.00
Health Care	\$30.00
Entertainment	\$175.00
Personal	\$125.00
Misc	\$500.00
Savings	\$340.00
Monthly Expenses	\$3,737.00
Annual Expenses	\$44,844.00
Taxes (25% of Annual Expenses)	\$11,211.00
Annual Salary Needed	\$59,792.00

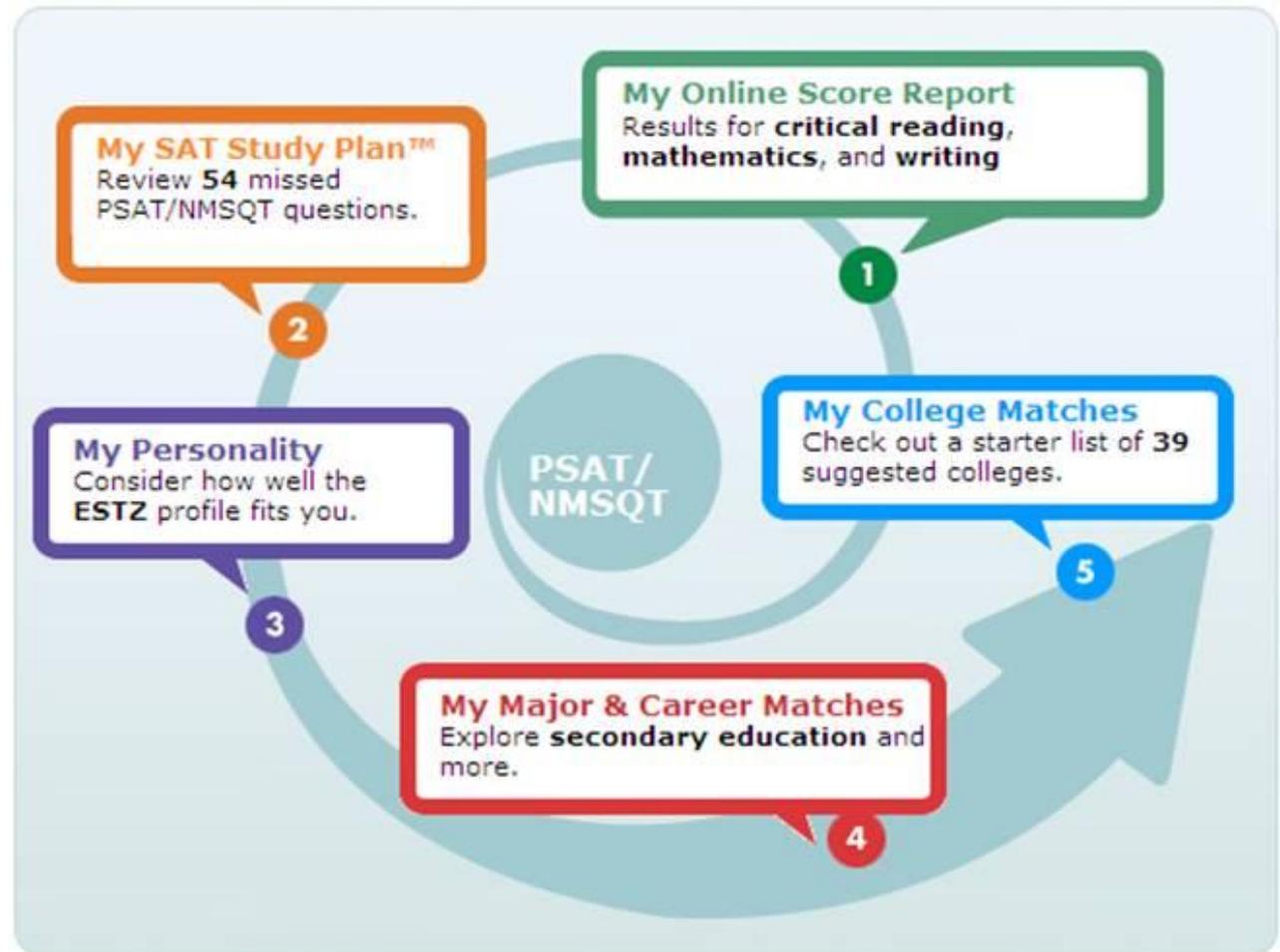
The bottom-right screenshot shows the "Results" section for the City of Austin, listing various careers such as "Administrative Law, Justice, Advocators, and Hearings Officers", "Administrative Services Managers", "Advertising Managers", "Agricultural Sciences Teachers, Postsecondary", "Air Traffic Controllers", "Aging Plans, Policies, and Plans Engineers", "Anthropologists", "Anthropologists and Archeology Teachers, Postsecondary", "Astronomers, Real Estate", "Architects, Royal Architects and Travel", "Aves, Birds, and Wildlife Studies Teachers, Postsecondary", "Art Directors", "Assessors", "Astronomers and Space Scientists", "Biochemists", "Biological Sciences Teachers, Postsecondary", "Biostatisticians", "Chemical Engineers", "Chemistry Teachers, Postsecondary", "Chiropractors", "Civil Engineers", "Computer and Information Systems Managers", "Computer Hardware Engineers", "Computer Programmers", "Computer Scientists", "Computer Software Engineers, Applications", "Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software", "Computer Systems Analysts", "Database Administrators", "Dental Hygienists", and "Economics Teachers, Postsecondary".

Example: \$60,000

- <http://www.jumpstart.org/reality-check.html>
- <http://www.californiarealitycheck.com/>
- <http://www.cdr.state.tx.us/realitycheck/>

My College Quick Start

- College Board
- Career and College Search
- Personality Test



Options for Students

- High Schools of Choice
 - Many offer Acceleration or Credit Recovery Options
 - eHigh (MISD)
 - T. Davis School (Private School, No State Testing)
 - Charter Schools
- Texas Virtual Network
- Job Corp
 - HS Diploma
 - GED Program
 - College Entry/ Assistance
- Alternative Degrees
 - Minimum(22) v. Recommended Plans(26)
- GED Program
 - Allows Entry into College
 - May Impact Financial Aid (State Level)
 - May Effect Military Eligibility
- Community College (Ability to Benefit Testing)
 - May Allow Entry without HS Diploma

GED to College Research

- On average, GED recipients complete their high school credential about 3.6 years later than do traditional graduates (age 21.3 vs. 17.7).
- Those GED recipients who go on to college earn their GED credential almost 1½ years earlier than their non-college-bound counterparts.
- While 7 out of 10 traditional graduates have entered college by age 35, less than half of GED recipients have entered college by that age.
- Among those who ever enter college, GED recipients enroll at substantially later ages than traditional graduates (23 vs. 19).
- Important differences also exist in the types of postsecondary institutions entered.
 - Among those who ever entered college, 58% of traditional graduates entered 4-year colleges compared to 33% of GED recipients. (p.1066).

Maralani, V. (2011). From GED to college: Age trajectories of nontraditional educational paths. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48 (5), p. 1058-1090.

Recommendations

Proactive versus Reactive

Recommendations

- Use data to identify students at risk of dropping out of school. This must be more than a mandated list, but a “living” report that expresses the actual needs of students.
- Provide support for these students. This may be in the form of:
 - Mentorship opportunities.
 - Individual student counseling/academic planning meetings.
 - Options for recovery credits.
 - Developing a graduation plan that addresses the individual needs of the student.
- Involve community support, such as providing mentoring, internship opportunities, and support for intervention programs.
 - Community Activists- Express Concerns to Law Makers

Recommendations

- Create engaging classrooms, where students see relevance in class work to their world, and to a much larger world around them.
 - Increased Offerings such as CTE and Certification Programs
- Utilize school counselors to use their expertise in addressing the direct needs of students, rather than spending their limited time on task that can be handled by other groups, such as lunch duty, hall duty, and standardized testing.
- Provide counselors with additional yearly training on graduation requirements, college admission processes, and changes to the financial aid process.
- Establish realistic counselor to student ratios that allow counselors to provide the needed guidance, support and encouragement for students to successfully complete high school and post secondary plans.

A Light at the End of the Tunnel

- “Jennifer” Senior. Expecting mother, due in February. Enters eHigh, and earns final credits needed to graduate. December Graduate! Begins Classes at Community College Summer 2012.
- “William” Fifth Year Student. Completes final course needed for minimum graduation plan in eHigh. Graduate!
- Jose returned to school, after dropping out. Has completed all required courses, and is awaiting next opportunity to take State Assessments.
- Video: Success Stories

Sharing Your Own Experiences

Final Thoughts

You have a voice! Use it to speak for those students in need of our support.

Become Active!

- Know Legislation and future legislative actions being planned.
- Share your Views
- Write Letters and make phone calls to Legislators
- Keep Others in the profession informed
- Stay Current on News
- Don't Remain Silent
- This is an important job!
- You may be the only stable adult in a student's life.
- Take care of yourself
- Spend time away from work
- Have something in your life not connected to the job

Questions?

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Additional Resources

- <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16>
- <http://www.aypf.org/projects/briefs/DropoutPreventionRecovery.htm>
- <http://www.aypf.org/projects/briefs/DropoutPreventionRecovery.htm>
- http://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/docs/19_01_05.pdf
- <http://www.jstor.org/pss/27795036>
- <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JITE/v36n3/friedenberg.html>
- National Center on Secondary Education and Transition. (n.d.). How are dropout rates measured? What are associated issues? Retrieved from NCSET website:
<http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/dropout/part1.2.asp>
- Phi Delta Kappa (2011). Dropouts by the numbers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(5), 14-15.
- Texas Education Agency. (2007). *Section 29.081: Compensatory, intensive, and accelerated instruction*. Retrieved from <http://law.onecle.com/texas/education/29.081.00.html>
- U.S. Department of Education. (N.D.). *Section 1802*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/dropout/legislation.html>