# Reducing the Dropout Rate

### E. Gregory Woods

*Increasingly, it is being recognized that the issues of dropping out and dropout prevention cannot be separated from issues affecting our total economic and social structure. These issues include poverty, unemployment, discrimination, the role of the family, social values, the welfare cycle, child abuse, and drug abuse.*
--Peck, Law, and Mills 1987, p. 3

# Introduction

School Completion, Goal 2 of the National Goals for Education, states: "By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent." This high-visibility goal spotlights a problem which has persisted for over two decades. Youth who drop out of school are predicted to be an even larger problem in the future (OERI 1987).

Dropping out is a complex social problem for which there is no simple solution. Focusing attention on fixing one part of the problem calls attention to the need for solutions to many other parts as well. Thus, many educators and others concerned with the dropout problem are advocating policies involving a broad range of institutions and agencies (e.g., Hargroves 1987).

# Definition

Who are America's dropouts?. Different definitions of dropouts, different time periods during the school year when dropout data are collected, different data collection methods, different ways of tracking youth no longer in school, and different methods used by school districts and states to calculate the dropout rate, result in unreliable aggregated national dropout figures.

Various ways of calculating the dropout rate reveal different ways of thinking about the issue. *Event rate* indicates the number of students who leave high school each year and is compared with previous years. *Status rate,* a cumulative rate much higher than the event rate, denotes the proportion of all individuals in the population who have not completed high school and were

not enrolled at a given point in time. *Cohort rate* describes the number of dropouts from a single age group or specific grade (or cohort) of students over a period of time. The *high school completion rate* indicates the percentage of all persons ages 21 and 22 who have completed high school by receiving a high school diploma or equivalency certificate.

# The Problem

## OVERVIEW

The 1993 National Education Goals Report indicates that there has been little if any progress on Goal 2. The high school completion rate among 19- to 20-year-olds has remained relatively stable since a marked increase in the early 1980s. Whatever the exact number, the high incidence of dropping out poses a serious problem to the social and economic health of the country and negative consequences for the individual dropout (Asche 1993).

As noted by Carson, et al. (1991), the number of dropouts is not really the issue. The point is that the world has changed, and the system's current employment needs do not tolerate dropout rates that have not changed over the last 20 years. Consequences of dropping out, which are identified in the work of Arndt (1994), Asche (1993), and the General Accounting Office (1987), include the following:

- As the pool of dropouts continues to grow, employment opportunities for them are more limited, because today's economy requires of the labor force increased literacy, more education, enhanced technological skills, and lifelong learning.

- 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, "pitting Americans with less education against computerized machines and people in low-wage nations" (Arndt 1994).

- A growth of unskilled laborers in low-wage jobs will increase the trend toward developing a large American underclass which "some analysts argue...threatens the continuing existence of a democratic way of life" (Asche 1993, p. 13).

As summarized by the General Accounting Office (1987), the social costs of the dropout problem include an underskilled labor force, lower productivity, lost taxes, and increased public assistance and crime.

## RISK FACTORS

J. A. Asche (1989) states that:

> Based on a thorough analysis of the research literature, Wells and Bechard (1989)

identified four major categories of factors that contribute to a student profile of characteristics that may lead to a student's dropping out of school. The four categories list risk factors that are school-related, student-related, community-related, and family-related. The likelihood of a student dropping out of school increases as the combination of risk factors becomes more multifaceted. (p. 10)

Poor academic performance is the single strongest school-related predictor of dropping out (OERI Urban Superintendents Network 1987; Hess, et al. 1987; Wood 1994). The most recent Department of Education annual dropout report relates that students who repeated one or more grades were twice as likely to drop out than those who had never been held back, and those who repeated more than one grade were four times as likely to leave school before completion.

Student-related risk factors include personal problems independent of social/family background. Substance abuse, pregnancy and legal problems are frequently reported along with school-related problem behaviors such as truancy, absenteeism, tardiness, suspension, and other disciplinary infractions.

Parents play a crucial role in keeping young people in school. The degree and nature of family support are determined by such factors as a stressful/unstable home life, socioeconomic status, minority membership, siblings' completion of high school, single-parent households, poor education of parents, and primary language other than English (Horn 1992).

Lest these correlations be misunderstood, it is also important to point out that, of the community-related factors, it is poverty that is the strongest predictor of dropping out. "When socioeconomic factors are controlled, the differences across racial, ethnic, geographic, and other demographic lines blur" (OERI Urban Superintendents Network 1987, p. 5).

Researchers have also found that working can contribute to a student dropping out. Some research shows that student employment begins to correlate with dropping out when the student regularly works over 14 hours per week (Mann 1986, 1987). Other research places the critical level for employment higher, at 20 hours per week (Winters 1986), with the likelihood of dropping out increasing with the number of hours worked.

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# The Literature on Dropout Prevention

Findings cited in this report are drawn from the 26 documents listed in the "Key References" section of the bibliography. Of these, six are studies, thirteen are reviews, and seven are syntheses of findings on school dropouts.

Looking at the subjects of the research, twelve reports focus on addressing the dropout problem at the high school level, and six are concerned with potential dropouts/students at risk in grades K-12. Subjects in the remaining reports were (1) the age range from 2 to 29, (2) dropouts in general, (3) high school graduates, (4) middle and junior high school students, (5) black high school graduates and dropouts in an urban setting, (6) Hispanic and language minority students, and (7) parents and the community.

## PRACTICES AND OUTCOMES INVESTIGATED

The kinds of school practices investigated in relation to dropout rates include (1) data collection

and tracking of at-risk students and dropouts, (2) group behavioral therapy, (3) variables that are instructionally effective with students from low-income backgrounds, (4) in-school factors that might influence dropout rates, (5) collaborative efforts between schools and communities on dropout prevention programming, (6) grading practices, (7) parental involvement, and (8) entering high school overage.

The outcome areas of interest to researchers in these analyses include (1) reduced dropout rates/increased retention of dropout-prone students, (2) behavioral changes leading to academic progress, (3) identifying characteristics of dropouts, (4) school-controllable factors influencing dropping out, and (5) variables that distinguish graduates from nongraduates.

Other topics examined by those whose work was consulted for this analysis include (1) attendance and factors affecting it, (2) characteristics of effective schools, (3) pupil information files and record keeping on school dropouts, (4) parents' views of alternative programs, (5) the relative importance of programmatic specialization in school selection decisions, (6) legislative efforts to increase school retention and graduation rates, (7) demographic correlates, (8) the value of the GED certificate relative to a high school diploma, (9) second-chance programs, (10) the history of school completion/enrollment in the U.S., (11) methods of evaluating the success of dropout prevention programs, (12) the factors associated with youth returning to school, (13) the similarities between effective schools and successful dropout reduction programs, (14) schools as High Reliability Organizations (HROs), and (15) educational indicators comparing the phenomenon of dropping out in the U.S. and other nations.

# Elements of Successful Programs

Research findings regarding the characteristics of effective dropout prevention programs are grouped below under five headings: Organization/Administration, School Climate, Service Delivery/Instruction, Instructional Content/Curriculum, and Staff/Teacher Culture.

## ORGANIZATION/ADMINISTRATION

The way in which a school or program is set up and administered has been found to impact retention of at-risk students and the dropout rate. The following components of the organization and administration of schools and programs serving dropout-prone youth have been identified in the work of Bickel, et al. (1986); Dryfoos (1990); The Dropout Information Clearinghouse (1989); Smink (1990); Peck, et al. (1987); and Asche (1993).

Size and location of the school or program play a role in dropout prevention. Creating schools-within-schools has been found to be effective in countering the high dropout rates associated with many large high schools. Small program size and a low student/teacher ratio are particularly beneficial. Alternative schools designed to serve at-risk populations of students have been successful, as has the practice of locating dropout prevention programs outside of schools in nontraditional settings in the community. Additional elements of successful programs include: (1) administration of programs by agencies outside of schools; (2) school-based management; (3) a focus on instructional leadership on the part of the principal; (4) fair but uncompromising discipline programs; (5) flexible programming and scheduling; (6) community and business collaboration; (7) staff selection and development; (8) transition programs; (9) definition and accounting procedures regarding dropout-prone students; (10) early intervention efforts; (11) schoolwide agreement on goals, objectives, and rules; (12) teacher autonomy; (13)

reducing suspensions and retentions; (14) eliminating tracking; (15) involving community role models; (16) promoting business partnerships and community learning; and (17) developing collaboration between high schools and colleges.

## SCHOOL CLIMATE

Attention to overall school climate is supported in the work of Bickel, et al. (1986); The Dropout Information Clearinghouse (1989); Smink (1990); Peck, et al. (1987); Wehlage (1991); and Asche (1993).

A climate characterized by safety and orderliness in a location that is accessible and nonthreatening can make a powerful contribution to dropout prevention. Positive enhancements include staff inservice to increase intercultural sensitivity and involving parents in school activities as steps to building a "family" atmosphere. A lower incidence of dropping out was also noted in environments where students were actively involved in the design of the program. Such involvement appears to increase their commitment and the perceived relevance of the program in their eyes.

## SERVICE DELIVERY/INSTRUCTION

A common thread which runs through successful dropout prevention programming is that it is student centered. No one structure or set of activities works for all students. A variety of strategies in various combinations should be used to address the entire range of student needs or factors that alienate them from school. The following service delivery/instruction elements have been identified as effective in the work of Peck, et al. (1987); Asche (1993); Orr (1987); Wehlage (1991); Bickel, et al. (1986); Dryfoos (1990); The Dropout Information Clearinghouse (1989); and Smink (1990).

Research supports the practice of identifying potential dropouts as early as possible and providing intensive intervention to insure early success. Involving families as much as possible and soliciting parental assistance is also related to success. Intensive individualized attention and instruction, including the use of tutoring and mentoring programs, and instruction technologies are recommended. In addition, successful programs are characterized by instruction and management in which there are clear instructional objectives, activities that are tied to the objectives, and close monitoring of student progress.

The researchers also noted greater success when programs included supportive services such as day care and opportunities to make up work via summer and night school and correspondence. Effective programs characteristically feature student assistance services to address substance abuse, teen pregnancy and young parenthood, suicide prevention, and other mental and physical health issues.

## INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT/CURRICULUM

Curricular components related to dropout reduction are identified in the work of Orr (1987); Bickel, et al. (1986); Dryfoos (1990); The Dropout Information Clearinghouse (1989); and Asche (1993).

Early childhood education/preschool and quality kindergarten programs are strongly supported, as is English as a second language and bilingual education. In general, a mix of academic

instruction and experiential learning appears to be most beneficial. Successful instruction includes concentrated reading and writing activities, basic skills remediation, test-taking skills, self-esteem building, social skills training, and parenting skills. Learning content with real-world application has been shown to enhance students' interest and involvement.

Links to the world of work in successful programs include goal setting, vocational skills, job training, work study, work attitudes and habits, and career counseling. In addition, summer enhancement programs are effective motivators and remediation opportunities.

## STAFF/TEACHER CULTURE

Findings regarding staffing for effective dropout prevention programs are found in the work of Bickel, et al. (1986); Asche (1993); Peck, et al. (1986); and the Dropout Prevention Clearinghouse (1989).

In successful programs staff members are committed to program success and hold high expectations for student academic achievement and behavior. Caring adults deal with the "whole child," showing interest and concern. A climate of collegiality exists among staff and extends to engendering a sense of belonging in children and their families.

## INEFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Research which has yielded information on effective dropout prevention practices has also produced findings about ineffective practices. Unfortunately, these practices can still be found. Ineffective practices identified in the work of Dryfoos (1990) include:

- State-mandated promotion policies. If standards and requirements are raised without support for school improvement and without personal attention to the varied populations of high-risk students and their specific learning requirements, the effect will be to push more young people out of school.

- Ability grouping. Students' self-concepts suffer as a result of labeling them average or below. Placement in lower ability groups is associated with lower teacher expectations and reduced learning.

- Early intervention without follow-up.

- Basic skills teaching by itself.

- Work experiences and on-the-job training with no other interventions. There is need for some kind of individual attention or mentoring as well.

- Grafting additional staff and programs onto existing ineffective structures, e.g., extending the school day or adding more courses.

- Increasing the number of attendance officers to cut down on truancy.

# Specific Programs

The programs described below have been evaluated and found to be successful as measured by reduced dropout rates and increased school completion rates. Not included are the numerous programs which serve the population of preschool through the early elementary grades.

- **The Adopt-A-Student Program,** operating in Atlanta, Georgia since 1983, pairs business volunteers as mentors with low-achieving high school juniors and seniors in a career-oriented support system. Students are helped to think about future employment, identify occupational interests, and begin taking steps to get a job that matches them. One result has been an increase in the graduation rate in contrast to a comparison group of nonparticipants. (Orr 1987; Dryfoos 1990)

- **Project Coffee** in Oxford, Massachusetts targets potential dropouts from 16 regional school districts. Components of the program include: comprehensive vocational instruction, integration of academics and occupational training, counseling, job training and work experience, and a school-business and industry partnership. Outcomes include improved attendance, increased basic skills competencies, and a lower dropout rate. (Orr 1987)

- **Rich's Academy,** located in a major downtown Atlanta, Georgia department store, is an alternative high school serving former dropouts and near dropouts. The program, in which volunteers play a vital role, is administered by Exodus, Inc., an Atlanta-based nonprofit corporation. Students are placed at random into "family groups" of 20-30 members that meet daily for group counseling and mutual support. Staff members provide supportive counseling and referrals in the "extended day" program which runs until 6:00 p.m. Parents are encouraged to participate, and the staff visit each student's home at least once to share the program objectives. The completion rate is 85 percent, with all graduates going on to jobs or postsecondary school. (Orr 1987)

- **The Alternative Schools Network** in Chicago, Illinois targets neighborhood school dropouts. Community-based alternative schools and youth centers provide a structured program of education, including GED preparation, employment preparation, job training and counseling. The program illustrates an effective way for community-based organizations to target the needs of youth dropouts in their neighborhoods and to work together in raising funds and designing a focused program. A 60-70 percent high school/GED completion rate has been reported. (Orr 1987)

- **Washington State-Funded Educational Clinics** are local centers designed to provide short-term educational intervention services to dropouts aged 13-19. In addition to basic academic skills instruction taught in small groups or individually, the clinics provide employment orientation, motivational development, and support services. Sixty-six percent of the students successfully complete the program by obtaining a GED, transferring into another educational program, or obtaining full-time work. (Orr 1987)

- **City-As-School (CAS)** is an independent alternative high school program that combines academic learning with the world of work for students in New York City. Students learn in specialized small classes which utilize community resources of a business, civic, cultural, social or political nature. Weekly seminar groups serve as a forum for discussions of guidance, academic and social issues. Evidence of program effectiveness is an increase in the course completion rate of students. (NDN 1993)

- **The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program** features cross-age tutoring designed to reduce

the dropout rates among middle school children who are limited-English-proficient and at risk of leaving school. Commitment is created by involving students and parents with teachers in setting goals, making decisions, monitoring progress, and evaluating outcomes. The support strategy includes coordination and family involvement. Student tutors participating in the program have a significantly lower dropout rate than the comparison group and national rates. In 1992, the program was recognized by the Secretary of Education as a model dropout prevention program, meeting the National Education Goal No. 2 of increasing the high school graduation rate to at least 90 percent. (NDN 1993)

- **The Lincoln Educational Alternative Program (LEAP)** in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin is an alternative educational program nested within a larger, traditional high school. For juniors who are "credit deficient and unlikely to graduate," this two-semester program combines intense academic and counseling work on social as well as academic skills. Classes are small, and there is a conscious effort to build group unity among the students involved. Improved rates of graduation are reported among participants. (Bickel, et al. 1986)

- An example of a systemwide, multi-component program to reduce the dropout rate operates in **School District 60 in Pueblo, Colorado.** The schools serve a working-class community where half the students are Hispanic. Early identification and intervention (as early as preschool) are high priorities, facilitated by a computerized tracking system. The program involves parents, and mentoring by volunteer adults and peers is stressed. Components include a teen mother program and a program for dropout reentry for all students. Rules on suspension have been changed: students who commit minor disciplinary offenses are isolated for up to five days and monitored by a supervisor. Resource teachers spend their time counseling and supporting students and their families. The dropout rates fell significantly in the school system during the two-year period reported. The retention rate for Hispanics showed marked improvement, with greater changes than those noted for other students. (Dryfoos 1990)

- **Upward Bound,** a national program in operation since 1965, provides academic and other kinds of assistance to economically disadvantaged, underachieving students who show potential for completing college. Colleges and universities or secondary schools with residential facilities operate Upward Bound programs in cooperation with high schools and community action programs. Intervention strategies include: remedial instruction, immersion in new curricula, tutoring that often extends into the school year, cultural enrichment activities, and counseling. During summer sessions students reside in campus housing and undergo intensive training for six weeks or longer. Evaluations of the program conclude that Upward Bound is successful in getting students to graduate from high school. (U.S. Department of Education 1993)

- At **George Washington Preparatory High School,** located in south-central Los Angeles, both parents and students are required to sign a contract. Parents must attend workshops on how to help their children and must visit the schools at designated times. Teachers must make daily calls to the homes of absentees. Absenteeism was less than 10 percent in the 1985-86 school year, and 70 percent of the students now go on to college. (U.S. Department of Education 1993)

- **The New York City Dropout Prevention Program** focuses on the transition from junior high to senior high school, a stress point in the lives of adolescents that contributes to

dropping out. The high schools have become social institutions which provide help for students and their families. Using a team approach, the resources of public and private agencies provide adolescents with support. Parents are an integral part of the program and are considered central to success. Overall, the philosophy is to provide adolescents with caring adults who understand their needs and who will support them. Implemented programs include flexible schedules, job development and placement for seniors, incentives for those who show effort and achievement, part-time employment that helps students achieve the transition from school to work, and tutoring and mentoring of younger at-risk students by older ones. Two years after the program was put into place the dropout rate went from 42 percent in 1985 to 30 percent in 1987. (U.S. Department of Education 1993)

# Recommendations

Based on the research they have conducted and analyzed, researchers have offered recommendations for holding at-risk students longer in school and reducing the dropout rate. These recommendations are a synthesis based on the work of the 1993 National Education Goals Report; Goal 2 Work Group (1993); School Superintendents and U.S. Department of Education (1990); Dryfoos (1990, 1993); Wehlage (1991); Winters, et al. (1988); Peck, et al. (1987); Presson and Bottoms (1992); and Conrath (1986).

## Nation/States/Cities

1. Implement a consistent nationwide recordkeeping system that will allow comparable state high school completion and dropout data to be reported on a regular basis.

2. Design and support research that informs educators and the public about those aspects of students' experiences that determine whether or not these students complete secondary school. Move toward developing and advancing theoretical concepts that treat retention, graduation and school completion as consequences of a dynamic interaction of such variables as student characteristics, school context, occupational prospects, and cultural influences, and that represent dropouts as students who are part of a social world and who interact with the people and institutions that surround them. Such theories offer a rationale for dropout programs based on the motivating properties of students' lives and for future research and design of dropout prevention programs.

3. Develop state policy requiring each school system to establish a management information system (MIS) that provides basic and common data on all students.

4. Develop state policy requiring schools to examine the effects of course failure, grade retention, out-of-school suspension, and other practices that appear to impact at-risk students negatively.

5. Establish state and local policies encouraging the decentralization of large schools and school systems, creating smaller units characterized by site-based management.

6. Establish state and local policies encouraging the development of new curricula and teaching strategies designed for diverse groups of at-risk students.

7. Develop state and local policies holding schools accountable for their dropout rates through a system emphasizing outcomes and results.

8. Develop broad-based community partnerships aimed at serving at-risk youth.

## DISTRICT

1. Make school dropouts a districtwide concern, and focus on changing institutions rather than changing individuals.

2. Intervene early. The timing of interventions is critical, i.e., in preschool and middle school. Continuity of effort must be maintained.

3. Set and communicate high expectations.

4. Select and train teachers who are interested in working with at-risk students.

5. Recognize that there is no one solution to this problem; risk factors are interrelated. Provide a broad range of instructional programs to accommodate students with different needs.

6. Provide a package of services within each community. Work with families, churches and other community organizations to develop a collaborative program for dropout prevention. "The strongest area of agreement [between experts' opinions and program practices] is in the efficacy of collaborative, communitywide multi-component programs using a variety of approaches." (Dryfoos 1990, p. 34)

7. Encourage and support programs that motivate parents to participate at all levels of their children's education.

8. Establish strong permanent alternatives as part of a comprehensive strategy of dropout prevention. Alternative schools should be high-status organizations, receiving resources commensurate with the tasks they undertake and the success they demonstrate.

9. Develop and implement a collection system for data on dropouts, and use it to identify groups at risk, set policy and fund programs at the national level.

10. Train staff in methods for identifying at-risk youth.

11. Focus on a team approach for working with at-risk youth.

12. Develop model programs with parents, teachers, business, government, and community participation.

13. Educate children to meet the changing demands of a technological society, not just to get a job in today's market.

14. Provide curriculum that is process oriented as well as content oriented.

15. Strengthen model programs for disadvantaged youth by providing a summer component.

16. Conduct broad-based needs assessment and planning efforts that include parents,

students, businesses, and social agencies working with youth and community organizations, as well as teachers and school administrators.

17. Provide dropout prevention activities for all levels, K-12, with an emphasis on early intervention.

18. Review and revise as necessary organizational variables, policies and procedures affecting the school's ability to meet the needs of high-risk youth. This should include review of student-teacher ratios, discipline policies and procedures, absenteeism, truancy, suspension, failing grades, and retention policies.

19. Expand networking as the capacity to create linkages across groups. The dropout problem is a community, business, economic and social problem.

20. Select staff based not only on subject area competency, but also on the ability and desire to provide a respectful caring environment that responds to the needs of the whole child.

21. Build into the program ongoing staff development as well as evaluation and feedback.

## SCHOOL

1. Identify, target, and monitor potential dropouts early in their high school careers, and continue monitoring their progress as they move through high school.

2. Establish high basic competency expectations for targeted potential dropouts.

3. Enroll targeted potential dropouts in a planned program of vocational and academic study.

4. Use applied instructional strategies to teach basic competencies.

5. Expand targeted students' personal views of their career and education potential and opportunities.

6. Use an interdisciplinary team of vocational, academic, and support personnel to plan and monitor curriculum and to provide extra instructional support to targeted students.

7. Implement a program of personal attention and extra instructional support to targeted students.

8. Involve business and community leaders in retaining students in school and advancing basic competencies of targeted students.

9. Involve parents. Research conducted by staff of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory states that some parent involvement programs have produced effects on student achievement "ten times as large as that of socioeconomic status."

10. Reassess the relevance of all educational programs which should reflect students' current and longer-term social and economic interests.

11. Make a positive school climate and positive relationships high priorities in the school and in the classroom. Students need to feel attached to school as a supportive community that recognizes their individuality and that cares about and promotes their success.

12. Students at risk need to have their efforts at school work recognized and rewarded.

13. Address conditions beyond school as feasible and appropriate. Students' out-of-school problems often need to be addressed before they can succeed academically.

# Conclusions

There is no one magical, quick fix solution to the dropout problem. The problem is complex and requires a complex array of solutions. Dropouts have dissimilar characteristics and therefore need different kinds of programs which respond to their individual circumstances and needs. Programs, to be effective, need to provide one-on-one intensive attention to at-risk students, who often must be convinced that they are competent and can be successful in school. The curriculum should include basic educational skills, social skills, and experiential education. In addition, the interrelated causes and multiple problems associated with dropping out call for comprehensive communitywide, multi-service approaches and multi-component programs if Goal 2 is to be achieved.

Children at-risk need to be identified at a young age (as early as preschool) so that early sustained intervention can be applied. Success in the elementary grades diminishes the possibility of later dropping out in high school. The key to reducing the dropout rate is helping youth to overcome their sense of disconnectedness. It is imperative not to isolate or alienate any students from the school.

Not all factors related to dropout reduction are school controllable, and solutions to the complex problem of dropouts cannot be achieved by the schools alone. It is a national problem which must be addressed by the whole society. It requires resources that go beyond the school, and solutions require a team approach--the combined efforts of students, parents, teachers, administrators, community-based organizations, and business, as well as the federal, state, and local governments.

# Key References

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Peck, N.; Law, A.; and Mills, R. C.
*Dropout Prevention: What We Have Learned*. Educational Resources Information Center/Counseling and Personnel Services Clearinghouse, 1987 (ED 279 989).

Reports on research and program efforts relating to school dropouts and provides nine recommendations to program planners.

Presson, A., and Bottoms, G.
*A Reason to Stay in School: What Educators Can Do to Reduce Dropout Rates*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board, 1992.

Identifies practices which reduced dropout rates in schools during the course of a three-year study and documents what went on at the sites where little or no change occurred.

Smink, J.
"What Really Works?" *National Dropout Prevention Newsletter* 3/2 (1990).

Features the perspectives of director of the National Dropout Prevention Center on strategies for retaining at-risk students in school.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
*The Condition of Education, 1993*. Washington, DC: USDOE, 1993.

Addresses the specific need for key data and indicators to measure the health of education, monitor important developments, and show trends. The report includes the text, tables and charts for each indicator plus the technical supporting data, supplemental information, and data sources.

Wehlage, G.
"School Reform for At-Risk Students." *Equity and Excellence* 25/1 (1991): 15-24.

Reports the results of a national study of 14 alternative secondary schools (urban, rural, and suburban) enrolling students at risk of dropping out. Findings suggest that effective schools provide at-risk students with a community of support and can prevent students from dropping out. Eight policy recommendations comprise a youth policy agenda for states and communities.

West Virginia Research Coordinating Unit for Vocational Education.
*Brief Guidelines on Information and Strategy for Dropout Prevention in West Virginia*. Huntington, WV: West Virginia Research Coordinating Unit for Vocational Education, 1984.

Discusses, among other things, the increased difficulties faced by the dropout today.

Williams, S. B.

"A Comparative Study of Black Dropouts and Black High School Graduates in an Urban Public School System." *Education and Urban Society* 19/3 (1987): 311-319.

Reports the results of a study intended to identify similarities and differences between black, urban graduates and dropouts in relation to five clusters of variables: demographic/personal characteristics, academic origin, family characteristics, feelings toward school, and feelings toward peers in school.

Winters, K. C.; Rubenstein, M.; and Winters, R. A.
*An Investigation of Education Options for Youth-At-Risk, Ages 9 to 15: Demographics, Legislation, and Model Programs*. Research Report No. 88-10. Washington, DC: National Commission for Employment Policy (DOL), May 1988.

Focuses on an investigation of the education options of youth-at-risk, ages 9 to 15, i.e., demographics, legislation and model programs.

Wood, L. A.
"An Unitended Impact of One Grading Practice." *Urban Education* 29/2 (1994): 188-201.

Investigates the relationship of high school grades distribution and dropouts.

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# General References

Baker, J., and Sansone, J.
"Interventions with Students At Risk for Dropping Out of School: A High School Responds." *The Journal of Educational Research* 83/4 (1990): 181-186.

Investigates the impact of school structures on students. Data from field notes, interviews, and school records were used to describe and discuss the effectiveness of interventions generated by one school committee.

Bonikowske, D.
*Truancy: A Prelude to Dropping Out*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service, 1987.

Provides an overview of student truancy as related to compulsory attendance laws, with briefs of major issues and trends in truancy litigations. Includes descriptions of effective prevention programs.

Charney, H.
"Project Achievement: A Six-Year Study of a Dropout Prevention Program in Bilingual Schools." *Social Work in Education* 15/2 (1993): 113-117.

Describes a program, based on behavioral group therapy, that helps low achievers from the second through the sixth grades handle behavior problems that are impeding their academic progress.

Coley, R. J., and Goertz, M. E.
*Children at Risk: The Work of the States*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, 1987.

Focuses on the different kinds of programs identified by the Council of Chief State School Officers to assist older students and keep them in school.

Collins, R .L.
"Parents' Views of Alternative Public School Programs: Implications for the Use of Alternative Programs to Reduce School Dropout Rates." *Education and Urban Society* 19/3 (1987): 290-302.

Reports the results of a telephone survey conducted with 2,000 parents in the Cincinnati Public Schools to determine parents' views of alternative school programs that school administrators need to consider prior to implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of such programs.

DeNofa, W. J.
"The Effects of Intervention on the Academic Achievement of At-Risk Students in Secondary Schools." *The High School Journal* 76/3 (1993): 215-220.

Reviews and synthesizes findings regarding intervention methods that have exhibited the highest degree of success with at-risk students in secondary school.

Dougherty, J. W.
*Effective Programs for At-Risk Adolescents*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1990.

Focuses on four programs to help at-risk and marginal students in one junior high school. The intended outcome is the prevention of risks that contribute to dropping out, i.e., drugs and alcohol, pregnancy, suicide, and apathy.

Duckenfield, M.
"Confronting the Dropout Crisis. The National Dropout Prevention Center." *Partnerships in Education Journal* 8/6 (1994): 5.

Describes the work of the National Dropout Prevention Center. Located at Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina, the Center is a partnership of concerned citizens, business persons and educators. Its mission is "to reduce America's dropout rate by meeting the needs of youth in at-risk situations through re-shaping school and community environments."

General Accounting Office.
*School Dropouts: The Extent and Nature of the Problem*. Washington, DC: General Accounting Ofice, June 1986.

Presents synthesis data on the dropout rate, the correlates of dropping out, consequences of early school leaving, and the results of some of the major national programs for dropouts.

Green, B. I.
"Preventing Student Dropouts." In *Brief Guidelines on Information and Strategy for Dropout Prevention in West Virginia*. Huntington, WV: West Virginia Research Coordination Unit for Vocational Education, 1984, 7.

Identifies reasons that dropout is a problem, the indicators of potential dropouts at the secondary level, and the attributes of successful dropout programs.

Hahn, A.; Danzberger, J.; with Lefkowitz, B.
*Dropouts in America: Enough Is Known for Action*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1987.

Discusses prevention and recovery to reduce the number of dropouts; also discusses job placement.

Herbert, V.
"School-Based Collaborations in Dropout Prevention: The New York City Experience." *NASSP Bulletin* 73/518 (1989): 84-88.

Describes New York City's Dropout Prevention Program, which is regarded as highly effective with at-risk students. Ten high schools spread throughout the City's five boroughs collaborated with community groups, city agencies, and businesses to address the problem of students dropping out because of medical, emotional, educational, and economic problems.

Jackson, T., and Armor, D. J.
"Carrots or Sticks for High School Dropouts." *Public Interest* 106 (Winter 1992): 76-90.

Discusses a range of strategies for preventing high school dropouts, from the common application of remediation or positive incentives to negative sanctions. Also focuses on the role of the General Educational Development Program in meeting the needs of dropouts who recognize the need for this certification.

Jones, B. A.
"Collaboration: The Case for Indigenous Community-Based Organization Support of Dropout Prevention Programming and Implementation." *Journal of Negro Education* 61/4 (1992): 496-508.

Reports results of a sub-study of a three-year (1986-1989) longitudinal evaluation of the New York City Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention (AIDP) program. One of the major goals of the AIDP program is to engage schools in collaborative initiatives with community-based organizations to prevent students from dropping out of school.

Kammoun, B. B.
"High School Dropout Programs: Elements for Success." *NASSP Bulletin* 75/538 (1991): 9-14.

Presents an analysis of the Dropout Intervention Program at Sweetwater High School in National City, California, which, in four years of operation, has consistently demonstrated remarkable results in decreasing the dropout rate.

Kaufman, P., and Bradby, D.
*Characteristics of At-Risk Students in NELS:88, National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988*. Statistical Analysis Report, Contractor Report. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, August 1992.

Offers a descriptive and statistical analysis of the characteristics of at-risk youth.

Kushman, J. W., and Kinney, P.
"Understanding and Preventing School Dropout." In *Youth at Risk: A Resource for Counselors, Teachers, and Parents*, edited by D. Capuzzi and D. R. Gross. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development, 1989, 345-366.

Focuses on understanding and preventing school dropout and looks at approaches to keeping potential dropouts in school.

Larrivee, B., and Bourque, M. L.
"The Impact of Several Dropout Prevention Intervention Strategies on At-Risk Students." *Education* 112/1 (1991): 48-63.

Evaluates the impact of six multilevel intervention models on student achievement, attitude, behavior, attendance, and dropout rates. Also identifies components characteristic of effective dropout prevention programs.

LeCompte, M. D.
"The Cultural Context of Dropping Out; Why Remedial Programs Fail to Solve the Problem." *Education and Urban Society* 19/3 (1987): 232-249.

Claims that students drop out because the schools are not in sync with the present reality, arguing that society has changed since the 1950s but the schools have not. Contends that schools need to be transformed such that the educational system is congruous with the social, economic, and philosophical reality of our postindustrial, multiethnic society.

LeCompte, M. D., and Goebel, S. D.
"Can Bad Data Produce Good Program Planning? An Analysis of Record-Keeping on School Dropouts." *Education and Urban Society* 19/3 (1987): 250-268.

Argues that dropout data are biased and skewed because of the way they are gathered and maintained. Claims that (1) the characteristics of the dropout population have been described badly, (2) faulty statements are made, (3) questions are posed that are impossible to answer, and (4) programs are designed which do not meet the real needs of the at-risk student.

Lotto, L. S.
"The Holding Power of Vocational Curricula: Characteristics of Effective Dropout Prevention Programs." *Journal of Vocational Education Research* 7/4 (1982): 39-48.

Offers a synthesis of the characteristics of effective dropout prevention programs that utilize vocational education and/or work experience components.

Mann, D.
"Can We Help Dropouts? Thinking About the Undoable." In *School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies*, edited by G. Natriello. New York: Teachers College Press, 1986, 15.

Presents and discusses ideas regarding approaches that need to be undertaken in order to address the complex dropout problem.

Mann, D.
"Effective Schools as a Dropout Prevention Strategy." *NAASP Bulletin* 73/518 (1989): 77-83.

Focuses on a set of six variables that characterize schools that are instructionally effective with students from low-income families.

McCann, R. A., and Austin, S.
*At-Risk Youth: Definitions, Dimensions, and Relationships*. Philadelphia, PA: Research for Better Schools, April 1988.

Reports on characteristics and needs of youth at risk of school failure.

McCaul, E. J.; Donaldson, G. A.; Coladarci, T.; and Davis, W. E.
"Consequences of Dropping Out of School: Findings From High School and Beyond." *The Journal of Educational Research* 85/4 (1992): 198-207.

Examines the personal, social, and economic consequences of dropping out of school. The High School and Beyond (HS&B) database was used to investigate the experiences of dropouts and high school graduates in 1986--four years after the projected date of graduation.

McKay, J.; Dierkhising, R.; Eggert, H.; Evanich, S.; Milobar, D.; Swanson, L.; and Tesch, B.
"The Holding Power Index: A Common Definition to Determine the School Dropout Rate." *The High School Journal* 76/3 (1993): 205-209.

Reports the results of a study whose long-term goal is to establish a common definition of what constitutes school holding power--as opposed to the dropout rate--for use by high schools.

McMillen, M. M.; Kaufman, P.; Hausken, E. G.; and Bradby, D.
*Dropout Rates in the United States: 1992*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, September 1993.

Reports dropout statistics for grades 8-12 and 10-12 cohorts in the United States for 1992.

Muha, D. G., and Cole, C. L.
"Dropout Prevention and Group Counseling: A Review of the Literature." *The High School Journal* 74/2 (1990/1991): 76-80.

Discusses the parameters of the dropout problem and the reasons students are dropping out. Presents a case for group counseling aimed at improving the self-concept of potential dropouts. Some cautions in using group counseling are presented, and suggestions are made for addressing the national dropout problem.

Nardini, M. L., and Antes, R. L.
"An At-risk Assessment: Teachers Rate Their Students on Academic Skills and Behavior." *The Clearing House* 65/1 (1991): 56-57.

Draws conclusions regarding the most effective programs of dropout intervention.

Natriello, G. (ed.)
*School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1986.

Includes a collection of articles that examine the patterns of dropping out evident among American youth, together with policies developed and implemented to reduce the incidence of dropping out.

Naylor, M.
"Reducing the Dropout Rate Through Career and Vocational Education. Overview." *ERIC Digest* 63 (1987).

Contends that the key to reducing the dropout rate is helping youth to overcome their sense of disconnection. Major concentration in a vocational program is helpful in student retention, and eight vocational experiences that are most closely related to reducing the dropout rate are presented.

Neufeld, G. R.; Chapman, D.; and Handy, L., (Eds.).
*Local Planning Process and Model Goals and Objectives. Stay in School Initiatives, Book 3*. Kingston, Ontario: Canadian Council for Exceptional Children, 1992.

Discusses dropout efforts at the local level, with a focus on the local planning process leading to model goals and objectives.

Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
*Educational Reforms and Students at Risk: A Review of the Current State of the Art*. Washington, DC: OERI, Department of Education, October 1993.

Identifies educational reforms and educational strategies that work with students at risk.

Pallas, A. M.; Natriello, G.; and McDill, E. L.
*Who Falls Behind: Defining the 'At-Risk' Population--Current Dimensions and Future Trends*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April 1988 (ED 312 330).

Defines and discusses educationally disadvantaged children and educational provisions for them.

Quinn, T.
"The Influence of School Policies and Practices on Dropout Rates." *NASSP Bulletin* 75/538 (1991): 73-83.

A review of effective strategies schools can develop to reduce the dropout rate.

Ruff, T. P.
"Middle School Students at Risk: What Do We Do with the Most Vulnerable Children in American Education?" *Middle School Journal* 24/5 (1993): 10-12.

Discusses and provides guidelines for establishing local programs for at-risk middle school students.

Salganik, L. H.; Phelps, R. P.; Bianchi, L.; Nohara, D.; and Smith, T. M.
    *Education in States and Nations: Indicators Comparing U.S. States with the OECD
    Countries in 1988*. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics, 1993.

    Provides international benchmarks for assessing the condition of education in the
    U.S. by state and in the U.S. as a whole by comparison with the nations of the
    organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Steinberg, L.; Blinde, P. L.; and Chan, K. S.
    "Dropping Out Among Language Minority Youth." *Review of Educational Research* 54/1
    (1984): 113-132.

    Discusses evidence concerning dropping out among language minority youth. The
    combination of socioeconomic disadvantage and early academic failure appears to
    contribute to the higher dropout rate of language minority youngsters. Four
    hypotheses are discussed regarding the higher dropout rate of language minority
    Hispanic students compared with other non-English-speaking population groups.

Valverde, S. A.
    "A Comparative Study of Hispanic High School Dropouts and Graduates: Why Do Some
    Leave School Early and Some Finish?" *Education and Urban Society* 19/3 (1987): 320-
    329.

    Compares various groups of Hispanic students in terms of school completion to
    determine the factors associated with completing school and with dropping out.

Walz, G. R.
    *Combating the School Dropout Problem: Proactive Strategies for School Counselors*.
    Educational Resources Information Center/Counseling and Personnel Services
    Clearinghouse, 1987. (ED 287 112).

    Describes findings from the dropout research and provides a list of strategies for
    improving school retention.

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