

Hot Topic for School Administrators School Dropout Prevention

Identifying Students At-Risk for School Drop-out

A. WARNING SIGNS OF AT-RISK:

Below please find information that identifies those students that are more likely than others to leave school before graduating. While not everyone in these categories drops out, paying special attention to the needs of students from these groups can keep some of them in school. Therefore, schools will need to red flag these students as early as possible.

1. Students in large cities are twice as likely to leave school before graduating as their non-urban counterparts.
2. Hispanic and African American students: More than 25% of Hispanic students drop out of school before graduating, and almost one-half of these will leave by the eighth grade.
3. More than half the students who drop out leave by the tenth grade.
4. 20% of dropouts do so by the eighth grade, while 3% drop out by the fourth grade.
5. Nearly 25% of dropouts changed schools two or more times.
6. Academic performance: Almost 20% of dropouts are those that repeated a grade and almost 50% failed a course.
7. Attendances: Almost one-half of dropouts will miss at least 10 days of school per academic year and over one-third cut class at least 10 times.
8. Behavior Issues: 8% of dropouts spent time in a juvenile center or shelter.
 - a. One-third were put on in-school suspension, suspended, or put on probation.
 - b. 15% were either expelled or told they couldn't return.
9. 12% of dropouts had run away from home at least once.

B. REASONS WHY STUDENTS DROP OUT:

School problems and personal factors appear to play a major role in students dropping out of school.

1. These students report that they didn't like school in general.

2. These students were either failing, getting poor grades, or couldn't keep up with school work.
3. Dropouts report that they didn't get along with teachers and/or students.
4. They had been disciplinary problems, or expelled.
5. Didn't feel safe school.
6. Have to get a job, to support their family and could not managing both school and work.
7. Got pregnant or got married.

According to the Children's Defense Fund (2002), one high school student drops out every nine seconds. In fact, the CDF reports that one-third of students entering high school fail to graduate. Additional statistics about at-risk students:

1. Students most likely to drop out come from
 - a. Hispanic, African-American,
 - b. Native American
 - c. Low-income backgrounds;
 - d. Live in single-parents homes
 - e. Attend large urban schools.
2. From 1998-2003, one-half of students dropping out of school are students with emotional and behavioral disabilities.

Research reports clear evidence that most students drop out of school between ninth and 10th grades. While the dropout rate is increasing, out-of-school education and training opportunities are decreasing. Economic opportunities for young students that dropout has been in declining since the late 1970s.

The United States has now slipped to 10th place in the world for graduation rates.

While these at-risk students are struggling, on average, only one certified counselor is available for each 500 students. In addition, school counselors have many administrative assignments that leave little time to spend with students at risk of dropping out.

There are more students in the 9th grade than any other. This implies that a large number of students nationally are repeating the 9th grade. This may be reflected in the significant shift toward

younger, less educated dropouts than in the past. These students face even more difficult challenges in getting jobs.