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ABSTRACT

Answers to questions most often asked about the second National Education Goal are provided in this document. Goal 2 states that "by the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to 90 percent." Among the areas covered are school strategies to improve graduation rates, community and business roles, incentives to stay in school, effective teacher and staff training, strategies to help limited-English-proficient and special-needs students, examples of outstanding at-risk and dropout programs, available federal dropout-prevention programs, and ways in which high school completion and dropout rates are measured. Contact sources for more information are provided. (LMI)

Resource Document

HEADING TOWARD COMMENCEMENT

Questions and Answers on Reaching National Education Goal 2:

"By the Year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to 90 percent."

U.S. Department of Education

HEADING TOWARD COMMENCEMENT

Questions and Answers on Reaching National Education Goal 2:

"By the Year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to 90 percent."

This publication is one of a number of resources the Department of Education has put together for schools and communities across the nation who are trying to meet the six national education goals. Here we present answers to questions we've often heard asked about Goal 2. In addition to the sources listed here, you may also contact one of the Secretary's Regional Representatives (listed at the end of this document) or call the America 2000 phone bank at 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327), in the District of Columbia call 401-3132.

U.S. Department of Education
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The National Education Goals

In September, 1989, President George Bush and all 50 of the nation's governors gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia for a historic educational summit. There for the first time in the nation's history, they established an ambitious set of six national education goals. The six goals for the year 2000 are:

1. *All children in America will start school ready to learn.*

2. *The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.*

3. *American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well so they will be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.*

4. *U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.*

5. *Every American will be literate and will possess knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.*

6. *Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.*

The America 2000 Strategy

To help communities create the best schools in the world for all our children and to move the nation toward the national goals, President Bush launched America 2000, a national strategy to revolutionize American education, community by community, school by school. America 2000 embraces four revolutionary ideas:

- *World Class Standards and a voluntary system of national examinations*
- *Break-the-Mold New American Schools*
- *Cutting red tape for teachers and principals*
- *Giving families more choices of all schools*

At the heart of America 2000 is the President's challenge to every town, city, and neighborhood in the nation to become an America 2000 community by:

- *Adopting the National Education Goals as their own*
- *Developing a community-wide strategy to achieve them*
- *Designing a report card to measure results*
- *Planning for and supporting a break-the-mold New American School*

As of October, 1992, more than 2,000 communities across the nation have joined the movement to transform education for their children.

For more information about how you can get involved in America 2000, call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327). (in the Washington, DC area, call 401-2000.)

National Goal 2: **The Challenge**

Dropouts: Lost Futures

Solving the nation's dropout problem means rescuing the futures of millions of young people. In today's world, young men and women who do not finish school pay a heavy price in lost opportunities. High school graduates earn on average 25 percent more than those who complete less than four years. College graduates earn 75 percent more than the average high school dropout, and the gap is likely to grow wider in the high tech, high skilled world of tomorrow.

Beyond the economic costs are the lost opportunities for personal enrichment. Students who have dropped out lose a chance to have their minds stretched as far and filled with as much knowledge as they otherwise could. Furthermore, many of these students could have been placed years before into "lower track" classes that often offer dull instruction in only basic skills. Thus they have been denied the joys that come from being educated people..

Every community in the nation faces a dropout problem. While most severe in urban districts, the dropout problem cuts across geographic, economic, and racial lines. In fact, almost 80 percent of high school dropouts are white. Even communities with graduation rates above 90 percent realize they must continue to improve, because the loss of just one student is tragic.

As with all the goals, reaching Goal 2 will require the dedicated and creative participation of the entire community. The America 2000 strategy, with its four part community challenge, provides a framework through which you can build that support and arrive at your own solutions to your dropout problem. We won't tell you what to do, but we will be there to support and encourage you.

What can schools do to raise graduation rates?

Insist on high standards for everyone. Low achievers and problem students are often "tracked" into remedial courses where teachers expect little of them and offer dull, repetitive, drill and practice assignments. Often, in an attempt to make the curriculum "relevant" to the non-college bound, schools direct these students into such courses as "Business English" and "Consumer Math." Not only do many of these courses offer little to hold students' attention, they make students believe that they are not worthy of anything better and that no one cares whether they succeed or fail. They often may feel they are just marking time till graduation.

All students deserve, and can thrive in, an environment that enables them to wrestle with ideas, solve problems, write clearly, read great works, and learn about their heritage. That's why Stanford professor Henry Levin created Accelerated Schools, where the idea is to speed up—not slow down—instruction for at-risk kids. San Francisco's Daniel Webster Elementary School, which follows Levin's model, posted the greatest achievement gains in the city in 1990.

Individualized instruction. Often students who drop out do not fit well into the standard instructional program. Schools should try to identify the individual needs of each student and try to place them in an appropriate educational setting.

- Introduce *specialized coursework* to bring those students who fall behind back up to speed. Simply forcing students to repeat a grade is rarely effective. Teaching them the same material in the same way a second time is likely to make them bored and resentful. With individualized instruction, teachers can try fresh approaches and concentrate on the areas where the student needs the most help.

- Offer *alternative school schedules* for those students who cannot conform to the regular school day, because of their or their parents' work schedules or because they are parents themselves. Hundreds of potential dropouts in New York City earn a diploma each year by attending classes in the evenings at the Manhattan Comprehensive Night School.

- Avoid *student assignments that stigmatize low achievers*. While ability grouping may be necessary, schools should avoid remedial courses with "dumbed down" content.

- Adopt *school choice plans* so that parents and students can choose schools that match each student's individual interests, needs, and learning style.

- Work to build *close ties with parents*, to keep them abreast of their children's progress and to enlist them as partners in

their children's education.

- Take steps to deal with *students' out-of-school problems*, like drug abuse, pregnancy, family problems. Provide individual and small group counseling. Match students with mentors--teachers, guidance counselors, older students, community volunteers.

How can the community help keep kids in school?

Parents and schools need the community to aid their efforts, to reenforce the message to stay in school, to broaden children's horizons and to provide role models. Involve as many community members and organizations as possible to form a web of supporting relationships for children.

- Groups like *boys and girls clubs* can offer before and after school programs where children can engage in safe, wholesome activities that broaden their horizons, teach values, and instill a feeling of self-worth.

- *Service groups and professional organizations* can serve as *mentors* for young people to guide them toward success.

- *Local media* can spread the stay in school message through *advertising campaigns* and other means.

- *Parent education programs* can teach parents how to support their children's learning and how to deal with adolescent children.

- *Parent support groups* can give parents the chance to learn from each other about how best to encourage their children to succeed in school.

- Where necessary, communities should *assist families financially* so students do not need to leave school to help support the household.

Information about communities trying each of these strategies is available from groups listed on pages 22 and 23, especially The National Dropout Prevention Center (803-659-2599), The WAVE (202-484-0103), Cities in Schools (703-519-8999), and Partnership Academies (415-369-1411).

How can the business community help?

Businesses can help make school challenging and meaningful for at-risk students.

Since we generally focus most of our attention on the college bound, students who have decided not to attend college often believe high school is not worthwhile either. While that belief is mistaken, schools need to equip these students with the skills that will qualify them for rewarding work after graduation. Businesses can help schools develop instructional programs to teach these skills and impress on stu-

dents that they will hire high school graduates with good academic records.

More specifically, companies can

- Help schools create *apprenticeship* or *tech prep* programs in which high school students divide their time between school and on the job training and graduate with certification in a specific technical area. Wisconsin, Oregon, and other states are implementing these types of school-to-work programs.

- Sign *"contracts"* with their student employees, promising full-time employment if they graduate from high school.

- *Favor high school graduates* who do well in school in hiring and salaries.

- *Volunteer their employees' time* to share their knowledge in the classrooms and to serve as mentors to students. For example, an architect can teach lessons in geometry using building design and construction as the backdrop.

- *Have employees speak in schools* about the importance of what students learn in school to jobs in their industry.

- Offer candid, constructive *critiques of student work* from an employer's perspective.

- Help implement job-related industry *skill standards* such as those recommended by the National Advisory Commission on Work-Based Learning and the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). (For more information on SCANS, call 202-523-4840.)

For more ideas about enlisting the help of the business community, contact the Education Department's Corporate Liaison Office at (202) 401-3060.

Do rewards or sanctions work?

In general, the key is to discover a "carrot" or a "stick" or some combination of both that is stronger than the desire to leave school. Many have been tried, and a few show promise; however few concrete results are available.

States and communities have experimented with these types of **rewards:**

- *College tuition guarantees,* to be paid out when the student graduates from high school and enters some form of postsecondary schooling. A recent report from the U.S. General Accounting Office found four kinds of rewards to be promising:

- *"Sponsorship" programs,* usually begun by an individual organization for students from low-income homes. Eugene Lang's "I Have A Dream Foun-

dation" is a good example.

- *"Last-dollar" programs* that help students find financial aid for college, then provide whatever additional money they may need.

- *"University-based" programs* in which colleges offer tuition guarantees and mentoring to students during high school.

- *"Pay-for-grades"* programs that promise money toward tuition only if the students attain specified grades. Louisiana, for example, guarantees tuition at state universities for all high school students in the state who graduate with a certain grade point average in core academic courses.

- *Public recognition of outstanding effort*, aside from superior academic achievement, for such things as good attendance, improved performance, and community service.

The following are examples of **sanctions** that have been tried:

- Tulsa County, Oklahoma, decided to get serious about the state's *compulsory attendance law*. The county's district attorney, superintendent of schools, and police department combined to crack down on truant students and their parents, prosecuting 250 parents in 1989-90. Since then, the dropout rate has dropped by 43 percent.

- 14 states have passed *"no pass-no play" rules* that forbid student athletes to participate in extracurricular activities if they fail to meet a minimum grade point average.

- About a dozen states have tried *"no pass-no drive"* laws that deny or revoke driver's licenses to dropouts. These laws, however, have had mixed success.

- The state of Wisconsin reduces *welfare benefits* to parents with truant children.

What is the best training for teachers and staff to encourage students to do well and stay in school?

At-risk students need teachers who have thoroughly mastered the subject matter they teach, who understand the importance of having high expectations for what their students must know and be able to do, and who understand fully the importance of cultural and economic factors in tailoring instruction to meet individual student needs.

The Department of Education has the following teacher training programs to assist school staff in serving at-risk students:

- **The School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program**
  (202) 401-1342

- **The Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Program**
  (202) 401-1059

- **Drug Free Schools and Communities: School Personnel Training Program**
  (202) 401-1258

- **Drug Free Schools and Communities: Counselor Training Program**
  (202) 401-1298

- **FIRST: Schools and Teachers Program**
  (202) 219-1496

- **Bilingual Education: Short Term Training Program**
  (202) 205-8766

- **Bilingual Education: Educational Personnel Program**
  (202) 205-8731

- **Dwight D. Eisenhower Math and Science Education Program**
  (202) 401-1062

- **Indian Education Act Personnel Development Programs**
  (202) 401-1887

The following Federal agencies also offer training programs or curriculum materials for teachers in specific disciplines. When contacting these agencies, ask for information about educational programs, grants, and publications suited for your particular context:

- **National Aeronautics and Space Administration,** Educational Affairs Division
  (202) 358-1110

- **National Science Foundation,** Division of Teacher Preparation and Enhancement
  (202) 357-7073

- **National Institutes of Health,** Office of Education
  (301) 402-1914

- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,** Office of Educational Affairs
  (202) 606-4380

- **U.S. Department of Energy,** Office of Science Education
  (202) 586-5000

How can we help limited English proficient students complete high school?

The best strategies for preventing limited English proficient students from dropping out seem to be those that encourage students to be actively involved in learning. Examples of such strategies include:

- Combining *English as a Second Language courses* with *academic and vocational classes.*

- Providing *tutors* to assist students with the language barrier and counselors to help with social and cultural adjustments.

- Holding *weekly strategy meetings* so that teachers can plan lessons, prepare team-teaching

activities, and talk about the progress of each student.

In addition, communities with non-English speaking parents should also:

- Translate vital information such as written communications from the school (e g., notes from teachers, meeting announcements) and provide translators at parent teacher conferences and parenting classes.
- Assist immigrant parents to understand the American school system's procedures and policies, like arranging a teacher conference, meeting with the principal, or getting a topic on the school board agenda.

What are some examples of outstanding at-risk and dropout programs?

Accelerated Schools

The brainchild of Stanford professor Henry Levin, these schools *speed up* instruction for at-risk children with the goal of getting the students up to grade level by the end of elementary school. They aim to make students learn to think rather than simply repeat by rote. They also take a comprehensive approach, coordinating curriculum and staff for schoolwide improvement. Accelerated schools have posted impressive gains in student achievement.

Contact Dr. Henry Levin, Accelerated Schools Project, School of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-3084.

School Development Program

Developed by James Comer of Yale University, this model is designed to boost academic performance by bolstering children's social as well as intellectual skills. Family involvement is the key, with parents helping out in the classroom and participating in school governance along with the entire school staff. A mental health and support team addresses the emotional needs of the students and deals with behavioral problems.

Contact: James Boger, Yale University Child Study Center, 230 S. Frontage Rd., P.O. Box 3333, New Haven CT 06510-8009, (203) 785-2548; or Marla Ucelli, Rockefeller Foundation, 1133 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. (212) 869-8500.

Coalition of Essential Schools

More than a hundred schools across the nation have adopted Brown University professor Theodore Sizer's model for comprehensive school reform. Sizer emphasizes concerted, schoolwide efforts at school improvement to make students active learners, able to think and to demonstrate mastery of important skills and knowledge.

Contact: Theodore Sizer, Coalition of Essential Schools, Brown University, One Davol Square, 2nd Floor, Providence, RI 02903. (401) 863-3384.

Model School Adjustment Program

In this program, sixth graders identified as at risk of dropping out receive extra attention to ease the transition to middle school and later to high school. These students are tutored by seventh and eighth graders and attend weekly peer counseling sessions. Their parents participate in parent education classes each week

as well. There are follow-up activities through high school, and the Broward County Community College offers free tuition to any student in the program who graduates from high school.

Contact: Mark Thomas, Coordinator of Dropout Prevention Programs, Broward County School District, 600 SE 32d Avenue, Fourth Floor, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301. (305) 765-6000.

Partnership Academies

These "schools within schools" offer academic and vocational training to potential high school dropouts with help from the business community. To enter the program in tenth grade, students must read at a sixth grade level and must have adequate motivation and self-management skills. Their time is divided between traditional academic courses and technical training in a field they choose. Students are assigned mentors in the eleventh grade and work fulltime the following summer if they successfully complete two years and receive recommendations from their teachers.

Contact: Marilyn Raby, Director of Curriculum Services, Sequoia Union High School District, 480 James, Redwood City, CA 94062 (415) 369-1411.

Project Coffee (Cooperative Federation for Educational Experiences)

The high school students enrolled in this alternative school have histories of truancy, behavioral problems, crime, and drug abuse. To minimize the opportunities for these students to get into trouble, COFFEE compressed the school day to four and a half hours and eliminated study halls. The average class size is ten students. Students learn basic academic and entry-level job skills and operate their own business.

Contact: Michael Fields, French River Education Center, P.O. Box 476, North Oxford, MA 01537, (508) 987-0219.

La Guardia Middle College High School

This alternative four year high school is housed on the campus of LaGuardia Community College. The high school students have full use of the college's facilities, and classes are often team taught by a college professor and a high school teacher. Students may also enroll in college classes. The school provides intensive counseling and places students in internships with a social service agency for one trimester each year. The community college environment removes the stigma sometimes associated with alternative schools, enriches the instruction, and gives students a taste of college life.

Contact: Janet Lieberman, Center for At-Risk Students, LaGuardia Community College, Long Island City, NY 11101. (718) 482-5049

Manhattan Comprehensive Night High School

Designed for students with adult responsibilities, this school offers classes from 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday evenings and all day on Sunday, when field trips, cultural and family activities, parenting groups, and physical education are also offered.

Contact: Howard Friedman, Principal, Manhattan Comprehensive Night High School, 240 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10003. (212) 353-2010.

Valued Youth Partnership

This course, which operates in five districts across the nation, helps limited English proficient students in middle school improve their English skills and their self-confidence by giving them the opportunity to tutor younger children. The tutors-in-training spend one class session a week with their teacher coordinators working on their own skills and learning how to teach their younger schoolmates. They then spend the remaining four sessions each week tutoring. The program also sponsors field trips, brings in speakers from the community, and provides high school students as mentors.

Contact: Maria del Refugio Robledo, Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association, 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, TX 78228. (512) 684-8180.

Cities in Schools

Operating 60 programs at nearly 400 sites across the country, Cities in Schools helps communities build partnerships to coordinate services for at-risk students at the school site. Through CIS's guidance, for example, the Atlanta Public Schools, the non-profit Exodus Corp., and Rich's Store for Homes founded Rich's Central Academy to serve low achievers, trouble makers, and other students who could not fit into the traditional school setting. The school features small classes and a lot of one-on-one attention. Parents receive progress reports and phone calls frequently, especially when a student skips school. Employees from Rich's Store for Homes volunteer as mentors and tutors. At least 91 percent of the students graduate.

Contact: William E. Milliken, Cities in Schools, 401 Wythe Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314-1963. (703) 519-8999.

Junior Achievement

Local franchises around the country work in high schools to help students run their own companies or to teach applied economics. At the junior high level, the organization runs a program called, "Economics of Staying in School."

Contact: Your local franchise or the national office of Junior Achievement, One Education Way, Colorado Springs, CO 80906. (719) 540-8000.

Where can I find schools in my area that have been successful in raising their graduation rates?

The Department of Education's Program Effectiveness Panel (PEP) identifies "exemplary" education programs across the country. "Facilitators" in each State can provide you with information on these programs, help identify the ones most appropriate for your community, and, in some cases, arrange for a program demonstration. A list of State Facilitators is available from the National Diffusion Network (NDN) Program at the Department. Call (202) 219-2194.

Here are a sample of outstanding dropout prevention strategies identified by PEP:

City as School. Combines academic learning with the world of work for high school students, including those at-risk. *Contact*: Marion Pearce or William Weinstein, 16 Clarkson Street, New York, NY 10014. (212) 654-6121 or (212) 691-7801.

De LaSalle. An individualized program of special services coupled with a core academic curriculum for high school dropouts. *Contact*: Regina Hansen, 3740 Forest, Kansas City, MO 64109-3200. (816) 561-3312.

Diversified Educational Experiences Program (DEEP) An alternative approach to managing instruction for the apathetic learner, the "discipline problem," the poor attender, and the potential dropout in grades 9 to 12, and occasionally 6 to 8. *Contact*: Jane Connett, Director; Project DEEP, KEDDS/Link, Administrative Center, South Building, 217 N. Water, Wichita, KS 67202. (316) 833-4711.

Focus Dissemination Project. Approved for disaffected secondary students and all high school educators, school board members, and community members interested in helping disaffected students learn responsibility to themselves, school, and society. *Contact*: Don May, Focus Dissemination Project, Human Resources Associates, Inc., Suite 200, 201 N. Concord Exchange, South St. Paul, MN 55075. (612) 451-6840.

Graduation, Reality, and Dual Role Skills (GRADS) A program for adolescent parents, grades 7 to 12, that focuses on effective decision-making in the teen family. *Contact*: Sharon G. Herold, Ohio Department of Education, Division of Vocational and Career Education, Room 909, 65 South Front Street, Columbus, OH 43266-0308. (614) 466-3046.

Project Intercept: An intervention program for students in grades 9 to 12 who have high rates of failure and truancy, along with a history of disruptive behavior. *Contact*: James E. Loan, Project Intercept, 1101 South Race Street, Denver, CO 80210. (303) 777-5870.

What Federal programs can help us in our dropout prevention efforts?

There are a number of Federal programs communities can take advantage of through their schools, most notably the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program and the Chapter 1 Program, two of the largest programs directed to at-risk and educationally disadvantaged students. Others are more specifically targeted, covering areas such as curriculum for at-risk students, better teacher preparation, providing food, clothing, shelter, and medical care for children and youth, parenting skills (especially for teenaged parents), providing students with marketable vocational skills and work experience, offering alternative education programs, and helping students obtain high school completion certificates.

These programs basically fall into two categories. *Formula grant programs* distribute money based on certain criteria to each state, who then administers the program within its jurisdiction. *Discretionary grant programs* provide grants that school districts and nonprofit groups must apply for on a competitive basis. Programs are funded through the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services, as well as the Commission on National and Community Service Programs.

Department of Education

Formula Grant Programs
(Contact your state education department for more information)

Chapter 1 funds compensatory education programs for educationally disadvantaged children.

Chapter 2 (State Block Grants) provides financial assistance to states for a wide variety of programs, including those that serve at-risk children.

Migrant Education Formula Grant Program funds state programs that serve the educational and health needs of children of migrant workers.

Adult Education State Program Grants fund state projects that teach adults basic skills and help them obtain high school equivalency degrees.

Discretionary Grant Programs

School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program. Provides funds to local educational agencies for dropout prevention programs, reentry programs, and model systems for collecting data on dropouts. Contact the Equity and Educational Excellence Division, School Improvement Programs, in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), (202) 401-1342.

Even Start. A family literacy program designed to improve parents' literacy skills and to ensure their children are ready to learn. Contact Compensatory Education Programs in OESE, (202) 401-1692.

Drug Free Schools and Communities Grants help states and communities develop and implement drug prevention programs. Contact the Division of Drug Free Schools and Communities of OESE, (202) 401-1599

Women's Educational Equity Act Program funds projects designed to improve educational opportunities for women and girls. Contact the Equity and Educational Excellence Division of OESE, (202) 401-0355

Magnet Schools Assistance Program provides funds to local districts to develop and operate magnet schools that are part of desegregation plans. Contact the Equity and Educational Excellence Division, OESE, (202) 401-0358.

The Office of Indian Education, in OESE, provides funds to local districts for various programs serving Indian children. Contact them at (202) 401-1887.

Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching (FIRST) provides financial assistance to States, districts, schools, and colleges to improve teaching and learning. One of the goals of the program is to reduce dropout rates. FIRST is located in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, (202) 219-1496.

Secondary Education and Transitional Services for Youth with Disabilities include funds for projects targeted at disabled students who drop out. Contact the Office of Special Education, Division of Educational Services, (202) 205-8109

The Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs' s Family English Literacy Program funds local programs that improve the literacy and parenting skills of limited English proficient adults. Information

is available from OBEMLA at (202) 205-8722 or the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, (800) 321-NCBE.

Department of Labor

Job Corps Centers, run by the Department of Labor, train severely disadvantaged 14 to 21 year olds and assist them in obtaining high school equivalency degrees. For more details, contact the Labor Department at (202) 639-1654.

Formula Grant Programs
(Contact your state labor or training department)

Training for Disadvantaged Adults and Youth Grants are given to states, which in turn pass them along to local agencies who train dropouts and economically disadvantaged people. Forty percent of the funds must be spent on 16 to 21 year olds.

Summer Youth Employment and Training Grants operate in a similar fashion, and are used to provide summer employment for disadvantaged 16 to 21 year olds.

Department of Health and Human Services

Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS). Administered by states, the program offers employment and training activities for recipients of Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC). The best source of information is the office in your state that administers AFDC.

Commission on National and Community Service Programs

Serve America Grants fund state community service and volunteer programs, including those that involve and serve dropouts.

American Conservation and Youth Corps Grants fund conservation and human service projects in which young people receive training and work toward high school equivalency degrees.

The Commission is located at 529 14th St., NW, Washington, DC 20045. (202) 724-0600.

How are high school completion and dropping out measured?

Counting the number of dropouts is very tricky business because it involves people and the multiple paths they take through life, and because there are several sides to the dropout coin. You can speak of completion rates, how many students *complete* school, or the dropout rate, how many *leave* school. Dropout rates can be discussed in terms of the number of students who leave each year and never graduate, or the percentage of people in a certain age group (19 to 20 year olds for example) who never obtained a diploma.

At the individual level, dropping out is extremely difficult to define. When a student leaves school, the school cannot tell whether he has dropped out or has simply moved out of town. Also, students who do drop out may later re-enroll, or get their G.E.D. The result is many inconsistent and imprecise definitions. Notice the definition used by one district: "A dropout is a student who has left school without re-enrolling elsewhere, as evidenced by an official request of transcript."

National Goal 2 is to raise the graduation rate to 90 percent. The National Education Goals Panel, established by Congress to monitor progress to the goals, described the current graduation rate in its first progress report in the following way:

- In 1990, 83 percent of 19 and 20 year olds reported completing high school. The figure is 86 percent for 23 to 24 year olds.

The Goals Panel offers detailed suggestions for communities on how to report their own completion and dropout rates in *Handbook for Local Goals Reports*, available from the Panel at 1850 M Street, NW, Suite 270, Washington, DC 20036. (202) 632-0952.

The National Center for Education Statistics at the Department of Education has set out to create a comprehensive system for monitoring the dropout problem in this country, by collecting dropout data from state education agencies using a standard definition of a school dropout. The number and rate of dropouts from public schools for grades 7 to 12 will be reported by school districts, states, major subgroups, and for the nation, with the first report to be published in November 1993. For more information, contact NCES at (202) 219-1651.

How should students with special needs be counted in high school completion and dropout rates?

National Goal 2 requires that the graduation rate for *all* students be increased to 90 percent and that the gap between minority and nonminority students be eliminated. Therefore, the completion rate even for students with special needs should be raised to 90 percent by the end of the decade. Communities will therefore want to examine graduation rates for these students as well the rate for the community as a whole.

For Further Information

The National Dropout Prevention Center
Clemson University
205 Martin Street
Clemson, S.C. 29634-5111
(803) 656-2599

Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students
The Johns Hopkins University
3505 Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
(301) 338-7570

National Research Center on Education in the Inner Cities
Temple University
13th Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue
933 Ritter Hall Annex
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 787-3001

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
New Futures Initiative
One Lafayette Place
Greenwich, CT 06830
(203) 661-2773

The WAVE (Formerly 70001 Training and Employment Institute)
501 School Street, SW Suite 600
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 401-3060

Office of Corporate Liaison
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW Room 4155
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