



Graduation Rates

Over a million of the students who enter ninth grade do not receive a high school diploma four years later. In fact, about 7,000 students drop out every school day, significantly decreasing their chances in the workplace and in life. The impact is not only on the individual; the nation's economic vitality is weakened and its social and civic climate eroded when students do not reach high levels of achievement and attainment.

But until recently, the American public and their elected and appointed officials knew little of the crisis in the nation's high schools, which is so clearly demonstrated by the low high school graduation rates in the nation and in individual states. Reputable, independent research has exposed a particularly distressing secret of the country's educational system: official graduation rates neither count nor report the large number of students who are dropping out of it.

- Each year, approximately 1.2 million students failed to graduate from high school (*Education Week*, 2006).
- Nationally, approximately 70 percent of students graduate from high school, but African-American and Hispanic students have a 55 percent chance or less of finishing high school with a regular diploma (Greene & Winters, 2006).
- Dropouts from the class of 2004, alone, will cost the nation more than \$325 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over their lifetimes (Rouse, 2005).
- If African-American and Latino students in New York graduated from high school at the same rate as their white peers, approximately 37,000 additional minority students would graduate every year (Education Trust, 2003).
- About 2,000 high schools in the United States produce nearly half of the nation's dropouts. In these high schools, the number of seniors is routinely 60 percent or less than the number of freshmen four years earlier (Balfanz and Legters, 2005).
- Over his or her lifetime, a high school dropout earns, on average, about \$260,000 less than a high school graduate (Rouse, 2005) and about \$1 million less than a college graduate (Doland, 2001).
- Approximately 75 percent of state prison inmates did not complete high school (Harlow 2003). A five percent increase in male high school graduation rates would save the nation almost \$5 billion in costs associated with incarceration (Lochner and Moretti, 2001; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006).

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