
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES

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Keeping children from dropping out of school

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❖ INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Adapted by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant, from information published by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education.

Students drop out for many reasons, some of which may even seem like good ones at the time — to help out their families or to start new ones, for example — and their decisions may be supported by the people closest to them in the belief that they have no choice. But the consequences of leaving can be great, and there are many concrete things that you can do to help your children stay in school and also meet their personal responsibilities.

Warning signs

Certain groups of young people 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.

- Students in large cities are twice as likely to leave school before graduating than non-urban youth.
- More than one in four Hispanic youth drop out, and nearly half leave by the eighth grade.
- Hispanics are twice as likely as African Americans to drop out. White and Asian American students are least likely to drop out.
- More than half the students who drop out leave by the tenth grade, 20% quit by the eighth grade, and 3% drop out by the fourth grade.
- Nearly 25% changed schools two or more times, with some changing for disciplinary reasons.
- Almost 20% were held back a grade, and almost half failed a course.
- Almost one-half missed at least 10 days of school, one-third cut class at least 10 times, and one-quarter were late at least 10 times.
- 8% spent time in a juvenile home or shelter.
- One-third were put on in-school suspension, suspended, or put on probation, and more than 15% were either expelled or told they couldn't return.
- 12% of dropouts ran away from home.

Reasons youth drop out

Both school problems and personal factors are reasons for dropping out.

- Didn't like school in general or the school they were attending.
- Were failing, getting poor grades, or couldn't keep up with school work.
- Didn't get along with teachers and/or students.

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- Had disciplinary problems, were suspended, or expelled.
- Didn't feel safe in school.
- Got a job, had a family to support, or had trouble managing both school and work.
- Got married, got pregnant, or became a parent.
- Had a drug or alcohol problem.

What you can do

Here are some ways that parents, working with school administrators, counselors, and teachers, can help their children remain in high school:

- ❖ Arrange for help with making up missed work, tutoring, placement in a special program, and/or a transfer to another school.
- ❖ Help them with personal problems, and/or arrange for professional help.
- ❖ Help them schedule work and family obligations so that there is also time to attend school.
- ❖ Help them understand that the choices they make — like marrying, becoming parents, failing courses, or behaving badly enough to get suspended — can seriously disrupt their ability to finish school.
- ❖ If students do become pregnant or parents, help them find school and social programs that will meet their special needs.
- ❖ If all else fails, help them find a GED program and encourage them to stay with it until they get an alternative high school diploma.