



FAST FACTS ABOUT RAISING THE GRADE

A high school degree is a crucial predictor of future success.

- 90 percent of the fastest growing professions and at least 60 percent of all current jobs require post-secondary education.
- The twenty-five fastest growing professions have far greater than average literacy demands, while the fastest declining professions have lower than average literacy demands.
- The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2005 was \$17,299, compared to \$26,933 for a high school graduate, a difference of almost \$10,000. A college graduate will earn over \$1 million more in their lifetime than a high school dropout.
- On average, high school graduates live longer, are less likely to be teen parents, and are more likely to raise healthier, better-educated children.

In spite of decades of warnings, America's educational system is still failing to ensure that the nation's high school students graduate prepared with the knowledge and skills to succeed in life and meet the demands of a changing society and economy - if they graduate at all.

- Approximately 1.2 million young Americans fail to graduate from high school each year – that's almost 7,000 students who drop out every school day.
- The crisis in our high schools is epitomized by the country's almost 2,000 "dropout factories," which are high schools that produce about half of all high school dropouts.
- 70 percent of eighth graders can't read at grade level, and a mere 3 percent of all eighth graders read at an advanced level.
- Though fourth grade reading scores have risen in the past few years, America's eighth and twelfth grade scores have remained essentially flat since the 1970s.

High school graduation rates reflect vast racial and ethnic inequities; the harsh truth is that many minority students are still receiving a lesser education than their non-minority peers.

- Only about 58 percent of Hispanic students and 53 percent of black students will graduate on time with a regular diploma, compared with 80 percent of Asian students and 76 percent of white students.
- Worse still, only 49.3 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native students in the U.S. graduate with a regular diploma.

- Schools serving a concentration of low-income students (who are often disproportionately minority) have three times more uncertified or out-of-field teachers teaching English and science than higher-income schools.

Our failure to prepare students to compete in a rapidly transforming, knowledge-based economy threatens the United States' international economic standing, as our young people fall behind in academic achievement compared to their peers in other developed countries.

- Thirty years ago, the United States was the world leader in the quantity and quality of both high school and college graduates, but our rank has fallen precipitously over the course of the intervening decades as other countries have improved their educational systems.
- In virtually every international assessment of academic proficiency, the performance of United States' secondary students varies from mediocre to poor.
- Though the past few decades have seen a greater percentage of students going to college, our college graduation rate has dropped from 2nd in the world to 13th in the past ten years.
- 15-year-olds in the United States rank 21st in science and 25th in math literacy and problem solving among their peers in 30 developed countries.

The serious neglect of our nation's high schools has tangible social and economic consequences in our communities - in the form of lost taxes, greater strain on social services, increased prison rates, and lost productivity - that directly affect every American.

- High school graduates are less likely to commit crimes, rely on government health care or use public services such as food stamps or housing assistance.
- Every high school dropout, on the other hand, contributes about \$60,000 less in taxes over his or her lifetime than a person with a high school diploma.
- Over the course of a lifetime, a person who drops out of high school will cost the economy about \$260,000 in unrealized wages, taxes and productivity.
- If the male graduation rate were increased by only 5 percent, the nation would see an annual savings of \$4.9 billion in crime-related costs.
- Cutting the nation's dropout rate in half would result in \$45 billion annually in increased taxes and cost savings to the federal government.

The good news is that we know that by improving funding and implementing proven tactics, we can change the lives of the 6 million secondary school students in this country who are most at risk of dropping out - and, in the process, change the course of our nation's future.

- In fiscal year 2007, the federal government appropriated nearly \$18 billion for pre-K through 6th grade programs and nearly \$16 billion for post-secondary education, but only about \$2 billion for middle schools and \$3 billion for high schools.
- Investment in early childhood and early elementary education has resulted in corresponding gains on the fourth grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test.
- Increased and well-targeted investment in secondary education will result in a revitalized and more effective system that ensures that all schools have a personalized learning environment, rigorous curriculum, community collaboration and effective leadership.