



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE CRISIS IN AMERICA'S HIGH SCHOOLS

What is the problem with America's high schools?

There is a crisis in many of the nation's high schools with serious ramifications for every young person's future success, our communities' well-being and our country's ability to compete economically in a rapidly changing world. Every year, approximately 1.2 million students fail to graduate from high school. That means approximately 7,000 students drop out of high school every school day. Nationwide, only about 70 percent of students earn their high school diplomas. Low-income and minority students are disproportionately affected by this crisis.

What is the impact of soaring high school dropout rates on the average American and local communities?

The nation's staggering dropout rates have tangible social and economic consequences that directly affect every American. The costs are enormous, taking the form of lost taxes, greater strain on social services, increased prison rates and lost productivity. A recent study concluded that simply cutting the dropout rate in half would create \$45 billion for the federal government in cost savings or increased tax revenues. Every American is affected by our failure to equip all high school students with the skills to succeed in life.

What do high school dropout rates mean for America's ability to compete internationally?

Today more than ever our young people need the skills to succeed and compete in a rapidly transforming, knowledge-based economy. While other nations have made dramatic gains in their ability to educate their students to ever-higher levels, America's education system has not kept pace, and too many of our students are woefully unprepared to face changing workplace realities. In international comparisons of academic achievement, students in the United States have fallen shockingly to 21st and 25th in science and math rankings, respectively. Among developed nations, our high school graduation ranking has dropped from 1st to 27th in 40 years, and over only a decade, the U.S. college graduation rate has fallen from 2nd to 13th. We ignore this international achievement gap at our nation's peril.

Why are America's high schools struggling?

Over the past several decades, educators and policymakers have largely focused their attention and resources on early childhood and the elementary grades, expecting to lay a foundation for learning that would continue as the student progressed through school. But students continue to need academic support in basics like reading and math as they enter their middle and high school years. Unfortunately, federal funding has not reflected this need. While the world has changed dramatically in the past twenty years, the American approach to high school education has remained virtually static.

ABOUT RAISING THE GRADE

What is *Raising the Grade*?

Through a combination of hard data, real-life examples and compelling personal anecdotes, *Raising the Grade: How High School Reform Can Save Our Youth and Our Nation*, written by former Governor Bob Wise, lays out the moral and economic imperatives for the urgent need to invest in and support high schools, and outlines solutions and strategies to create meaningful high school reform.

What is Governor Bob Wise's background?

Governor Wise is a former congressman and governor of West Virginia, and one of the nation's leading experts on high school reform. In 2005, he became president of the Alliance for Excellent Education.

Why did Governor Wise decide to write this book?

Governor Wise wrote *Raising the Grade* to share what he wished he had known when he was in public office in the hope that others will use the lessons that he has learned to improve our nation's high schools.

What does Governor Wise believe is the main reason for the crisis in America's high schools?

Governor Wise makes the case that decades of neglect by federal policymakers have contributed to the crisis in high schools. While the federal government spends significant resources to improve education for younger children - and, at the other end of the spectrum, provide students with access to college - high school students have been largely ignored by policymakers. Early childhood and elementary education is, of course, essential to provide a solid foundation - but unless education is viewed as a continuous process and students are given the support they need through secondary school, the United States will continue to fall behind.

What solutions does Governor Wise advocate to address this issue?

Using examples from high schools across the country, *Raising the Grade* advocates research-based solutions that can help to solve the crisis in America's high schools. While recognizing that there is no one-size-fits all approach, Governor Wise identifies specific strategies that have proven successful in turning around failing schools. In addition, Governor Wise calls for an expanded federal role in strategically investing and supporting high school reform.

Where will proceeds from the book go?

All proceeds from the book will go to the Alliance for Excellent Education to support its efforts on behalf of millions of at-risk students

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION

What is the Alliance for Excellent Education?

The Alliance for Excellent Education is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to reforming secondary education systems to ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for success. More information about the policy and advocacy organization and how to contribute to its efforts can be found at www.all4ed.org.

How is the Alliance for Excellent Education facilitating high school reform?

The Alliance encourages federal policy changes that support effective secondary school reform and helps to build the public will for those changes to improve educational achievement and attainment levels for secondary school students. The Alliance hosts and presents at meetings and conferences across the country; produces reports, briefs, and other publications; and issues regular press releases to provide the media and others with national and state-level data and information about the impact of education reform

at the national, state, and local level. The Alliance publishes a bi-weekly newsletter, *Straight A's*, which provides information on public education policy and progress in an accessible format.

Where does funding for the Alliance from Excellent Education come from?

The Alliance was founded in 2001 by philanthropists Gerard and Lilo Leeds. Funding for the organization comes from the Leeds family, other generous individuals, and foundations and corporations.