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The determining factors of high school dropouts

Tracy Allen Babers Sr.

THE DETERMINING FACTORS OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

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in

Education:

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by

Tracy Allen Babers Sr.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to address the nationwide problem that high school students are dropping out in great numbers; however, there is no clear answer as to why this epidemic is occurring. This problem can be detected in high schools across the country from California to New York. The reasons for dropping out, according to high school dropouts when questioned, vary from one individual to the next. Therefore it is important to find what the factors are that determine who is most likely to drop out of high school. The method for this project was a review of literature collected through journal articles, the internet and books. The factors found to play the biggest role were race, academic age/grade, and gender. There are some programs being used and successfully helping students from dropping out early. The programs need money to put together and not all schools have the extra funds so the government will have to play a part for schools to create the programs necessary.

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To my friends, thanks for caring and trusting in me to make the right choices in life.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

The number of high school dropouts has been a concern

for years.   Students of all ages drop out, but for this

study the age range that is focused on is between 15 and 18

years old.   What we already know is that dropouts come from

all backgrounds, both male and female, as well as from

different ethnic backgrounds.   The reasons, however,

fluctuate when it comes to why students are leaving school

before graduation.

In one study which focused only in the state of Texas,

it was found that "the highest dropout rates are found in

school districts located in urban areas, the lowest in

rural and nonmetropolitan fast growing areas" (Texas

Education Agency, 1996).   According to a study done by the

National Center for Education Statistics, school year 2000-

01, the dropout rate in grades 9-12 by state ranged from

2.2 percent in North Dakota to 10.9 percent in Arkansas.

"Several educational researchers believe that the most

reliable dropout statistic is 25 percent" (Franklin, 1992).

The reasons why students drop out can be grouped into different categories. Wells, Bechard, and Hambly (1989) identified four major categories of factors that contribute to a student profile of characteristics that may lead to a student's dropping out of school. The four categories list risk factors that are school-related, student-related, community-related, and family-related. The likelihood of a student dropping out of school increases as the combination of risk factors becomes more multifaceted. Factors such as peer pressure, drugs, society, and home lifestyle fall into these four groups.

It is important to find answers as to why so many students are dropping out because education is an important factor in achieving a status in life. The less education one has almost guarantees them less success in an American society. Fine (1991) reported stated that 8 percent of white males live in poverty, 11 percent of white females, 16 percent of African-American males, and 31 percent of African-American females, therefore "a high school degree is more valuable to those already privileged by class, race/ethnicity, gender, and geography" (p. 23). With the rising cost of living, an education is beneficial to all students in order to obtain a decent job and in order to

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support themselves and their future families. Mann (1986) found that student employment begins to correlate with dropping out when the student regularly works over 14 hours per week.

There is a huge problem at hand. In a study done by Kaufman, Kwon, Klein, and Chapman (1999), they reported that each year about 5 percent of all high school students drop out of school. With so many kids leaving school before their education is completed, it is important to find out why. The purpose of this study was to examine high school student dropouts and determine what factors they most have in common. In order to investigate this problem accurately it is helpful to determine the ratio between male and female dropouts between the ages of 15 and 18 years old of all ethnics.

Statement of the Problem

Students have been dropping out for years and yet there is no clear answer why. The definition of a dropout is also unclear because it is defined differently in each school district. "In fact, there is some controversy over whether dropout rates accurately represent the number of students who leave high school without finishing, because

there is no standardized method to track students who stop

attending school" (http://www.kidsdata.org, 2006).

Students leave school for many different reasons.

The reasons students drop out can be grouped, however,

according to some studies. Some students may drop out due

to pregnancy or birth of their child, while others may

leave due to poor social status or their family may need

them to work in order to help increase the family income.

The number of students who drop out each year

fluctuates and is never a steady number. Using Arizona

statistics as an example, in 1991 the dropout rate for

grades 9-12 was 11.0 percent, in 1996 it was 10.0 percent

and in 2000-01 it was 10.9 percent, (Young, 1998). The

number fluctuates in every state, each year, it is never

consistently steady. What is more consistent however, are

the groups of dropouts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors

that cause high school students to drop out. It is

necessary to examine the different categories which have

the most significant statistics. These categories include

gender, race, and age. Risk factors and causes are also

important to look at in order to understand the percentages found. Such risk factors include but are not limited to the area a student lives or whether or not they live in a one or two parent household.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of this study are the textbooks used, the scholarly journals, and the age range of the students being looked at. This study was focused on high school students as dropouts and excludes all other age groups, including junior high as well as elementary school-aged students, in order to narrow the study to be more focused. In order to be more focused, the selection of journals and books were limited to only focus on high school students as well. This study was also limited to the resources which were available at the CSUSB campus library.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Determining Factors Found

This literature review consists of studies related to
information based on students who drop out of high school.
How do we define a dropout? For the purpose of this study,
a dropout can be defined as a student in grade nine through
twelve who leaves school prior to graduation for reasons
other than transfer to another school and does not re-
enroll before the following October 1.

The number of students that drop out of school before
they graduate is on average about 25 percent of the number
of students enrolled. Kaufman reported in the National
Center for Education Statistics report that "five out of
every 100 students enrolled in October 2000 left school
before October 2001 without successfully completing a high
school program" (2001, p. iv). The purpose of this review
is to use specific areas of interest to help determine why
it is that students are dropping out. The areas of
interest that will be a main focus for this review are: (a)
who is a more likely candidate, male or female? (b) What
race has an overall higher percentage drop out rate? (c)

What academic grade are the majority of high school dropouts in? (d) What are some of the underlying causes? (e) What are some risk factors? This review is limited to students in high school only and excludes students of all other ages.

Male Verses Female Dropouts

Both the male and female population is affected by drop out rates in America's schools. The rates vary according to which state the statistics are taken from. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 1998, "56.8 percent of all status dropouts were male, compared with 43.2 percent of all females" (Young, 1998 p.14). A few years later Kaufman and Alt (2001) reported that, "the dropout rates for males and females have not tended to differ significantly over the last 30 years" (p. 9). According to Young (2003), the 2001 NCES shows that the numbers are very consistent with 1998, the male dropout rate was 57 percent and the female dropout rate was 43 percent (p. 14).

Statistics indicate that males have a higher dropout rate than females do. "Female students graduate high school at a higher rate than male students. Nationally, 72

percent of female students graduated, compared with 65 percent of male students." (Greene, Winters, 2006). Greene and Winters (2006) also reported that the difference between male and female dropout rates are much more significant among minorities, "An already low 58 percent and 59 percent of Hispanic and African-American females graduated from high school in 2003; only 49 percent and 48 percent of males in these categories earned a diploma."

For females, there are a large number that leave school in their junior and senior year due to pregnancy and childbirth. "The problem of females' leaving school because of marriage and/or pregnancy is now a major factor. . . About half of all female dropouts leave for this combined reason (Natriello, 1986, p. 72). This is a predicament that does not affect the male population as greatly as the female population.

Female students stop going to school in order to work full time or stay home with their child. Fine (1991) stated that in fact it is "typical for a pregnant teen to drop out due to the social pressures, inability to schedule classes, and absence of day care and 40 percent of pregnant teens drop out of high school" (p. 77).

Males tend to leave school earlier, due to having or expecting children as well as other factors such as employment to help meet their family's financial needs or also because they fall victim to the peer pressure they get from the streets. Bennett (1999) reports that "more than 70 percent of 16 year-olds who are in school now work, and they are spending more time on the job" (p. 109).

Erik Nelson (1985) gives an overall percentage indicating however, that males have a 15 percent dropout rate vs. the females' 13 percent drop out rate. These statistics show males as more likely than females to drop out, but they are very close in number. Each study varies from the next because schools keep their statistics based on different standards, thus explaining why different studies have such drastic differences in the numbers reported.

Another study indicated that males are twice as likely as females to graduate at or above the twelfth grade level and that they are 50 percent more likely than females to be reading at a twelfth grade level when they graduate. (Fine 1991, Duttweiler, 1995).

Race

Dropout rates among large racial and ethnic groups vary on a large scale. In a report by Kaufman, Kwon, Klein, & Chapman (1998), the dropout rates among persons 16 to 24 years old were 7.7 percent for White; non-Hispanics; 13.8 for Black, non-Hispanics; and 29.5 for Hispanics. This high Hispanic dropout rate has caused the federal government great concern. "Demographically, graduates were more likely to come from two-parent households, to be raised by foreign-born adults (or be foreign-born themselves), and to be the youngest or almost youngest in the family" (Fine, 1991, p. 133).

The percentage of dropouts lies heavily on the Hispanic population. Data from the *National Center for Education Statistics* showed a 44.4 percent dropout rate among Hispanics aged 16-24 who were born outside of the United States and a 15.8 percent who had both parents born in the United States (1999). *The National Center for Education Statistics* reported a few years later that the rates were lower for the Hispanic students who were born inside of the United States compared to those who were not, "however, regardless of their place of birth, Hispanic

young adults were more likely to be dropouts than their non-Hispanic peers" (Young, 2003, p. 12).

Hispanics do not only have higher drop out rates, but "they attain lower levels of education than non-Hispanics do", (Kim, Rendon, Valdez, 1998). Hispanics who are first generation born US citizens have a higher drop out rate than those who are second or third generation. "Minority students have represented a higher percentage of total dropouts since the 1987-88 school year. Hispanics have made up the greatest percentage of dropouts since 1988-89" (Texas Education Agency, 1996, p. 512).

Minorities, including Hispanics, tend to live in a more economically disadvantaged neighborhood than those of Caucasians. In the neighborhoods that are more affected by poverty and crime, students' chances of being tempted into peer pressure increase. Bennett (1999) reported that in an "analysis of extremely poor neighborhoods in 75 U.S. cities, *Education Week* found that 63 percent of the children in those areas were African-American" (p. 111).

Since a great number of minorities are affected by their neighborhoods, they have a greater stress factor at home as well as outside of their home after school. These students become victims of their own surroundings. Some of

the students from such families may feel forced to put food on the table, and to help they choose to work or even illegal activities versus going to school. This seems to be one reason that there are more minorities that drop out than Caucasians. The majority of Caucasian students live in middle to upper class neighborhoods. Their parents are more educated and they tend to have a more stable living condition. This makes it easier for these students to go to school, obtain good grades and fight peer pressure. "The high school diploma yields, for whites, men, and upper-middle-class students, consistently more per additional year of education than it does for African-Americans and Latinos, women and working-class or low income students" (Fine, 1991, p. 23).

Academic Grade/Age

So does age play an important role in dropout rates? "In October 1998, nearly 5 out of every 100 young adults enrolled in high school in October 1997 had left high school without successfully completing a high school program" (Young, 2003, p.25). Students drop out continuously throughout the high school years regardless of their age or grade level that they are in. However, there

does tend to be a decrease in the percentage of the total

number of students who enroll in ninth grade by the time

they are in the twelfth grade. A report published on The

American Youth Policy Forum website stated that, "students

typically drop out at the ages of 15, 16 or 17 depending on

the legal requirements in their district. The exception is

young pregnant women for whom there is no legal minimum age

for dropping out of school" (http://www.aypf.org, 1995).

Starting in the ninth grade, the overall drop out rate is a

percentage of 22.9 compared to the twelfth grade, which is

a 15.6 (Texas Education Agency, 1996, p. 512). Each year

the percentage goes down but is not gone. The further a

student makes it through school, their odds of graduating

increase.

This is not the only explanation for a drop in

percentage however. The decrease in the number could also

be attributed to the changes in the drop out definition.

By the twelfth grade a lot of students finish all of their

required courses but are unable to pass their exit tests,

this in turn causes them to leave school without a diploma.

This number of students has been removed from the number of

dropouts reported. It reduces the overall number of

dropouts by 25 percent, which can also explain the huge

difference in the ninth and twelfth grade percentages
reported.

Causes

Some of the main causes for high school dropouts are
personal situations that affect students such as school and
home stability, school experiences, social behavior, and
rebellion. When a student lives in one home and attends
one school, their life is more likely to be stable than a
student who moves frequently or encounters a lot of change
in their household. Having school stability will allow
students to enjoy their work as well as their surroundings
and peers.

Students that move from one place to another are more
easily pushed towards withdrawal and rebellion against
their new environment as well as their family. "A growing
body of research suggests that both residential mobility
(changing residences) and school mobility (changing
schools) increases the risk of dropping out of high school"
(Astone & McLanahan, 1994).

If students feel unaccepted on campus they no longer
want to attend classes. Many students who are considered
outcasts tend to rebel against their school, classmates,

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family and the general public. These students lean towards the only place they feel comfortable and it is usually outside of their school. Many of the male students who find themselves in this sort of rebellion may end up in jail. "Eighty percent of prisoners in America are high school dropouts" according to the National Dropout Prevention Network, study of *Dropout Statistics* (www.ncrel.org, 2000). They turn to the streets which in turn introduces them to the wrong crowd. Flores-Gonzales (2002) points out that it is "the students who lack connections to school who take on street identities and end up dropping out" (p. 13). School experiences may vary and as Catherine Gewertz reported, "students often cited a lack of motivation and of interesting classes as reasons they eventually disappeared from school. Sixty-nine percent said they were not motivated or inspired to work hard. Nearly half said their classes were not interesting. Two-thirds said they would have worked harder if they had been challenged to do so" (2006, p. 2).

Students who tend to have a lack of goals also seem more likely than those who do, to drop out. Brodinsky found that "students who lack life goals or career aspirations were found to function at a low level of social integration

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and school accomplishment" (1989, p. 14). Students need a goal in life, something that they know they can strive for, an accomplishment that will make them feel good. If a student has no goal then they can be easily sidetracked and school may not entertain them any more. When this occurs, situations outside of school then take the place of their attention.

A Texas school district also submitted a list of reasons that students drop out. The list consists of such reasons as (a) poor attendance, (b) low or failing grades, (c) because of their age, (d) to get married, and (e) due to being expelled or suspended. Poor attendance accounted for an average of 48 percent of all students who dropped out. All of these issues can significantly correlate to home and school stability. If there are any problems either at home or in school, or both places, the student's chances of doing poor or being absent from class increase.

All of the reasons that the Texas school district points out can be due to the other reasons listed previously. Some other factors attributing to dropping out of school were reported as students having low grades and poor attendance, not getting along with the teachers and some students even reported that they were "bored" in

class. "Poor academic performance is the single strongest school-related predictor of dropping out" (Hess, 1995). These can be associated with problems with peers, or school activities but are not limited to those factors.

Risk Factors

Students raised in a single-parent home tend to have higher drop out rates than those who have both parents in the home. Astone and McLanahan (1991) reported that from previous research, "students from single-parent and step-parent families are more likely to drop out of school than students from two-parent families".

Family structure is a determining factor of what it takes to raise a family. According to research done by NCES, "in 2001, high school students living in low-income families were six times as likely as their peers from high-income families to drop out of high school" (Kaufman, Alt, 2001, p. 8). It usually requires more than one income to support a family and some literature edited by Bennett, points out that more than 51.9 percent of mothers of children one year and younger are in the work force (Johnson, 2000 p. 488). There becomes a functional deficiency, an indicator which Wehlage "refers to low

involvement of parents with their children" (1996, p. 305).

Students placed into this functional deficiency lack the

involvement and communication with their parent/s and in

turn the effect the expectations placed on the student by

the parent. The parent is less involved, in turn placing

less emphasis on the importance of education.

Students who grow up with one parent who works, lacks

the time and attention they need in order to do well in

school academically. "Empirical studies have found that

students who monitor and regulate their activities, provide

emotional support, encourage independent decision-making

(known as authoritative parenting style), and are generally

more involved in their schooling are less likely to drop

out of school" (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). This also

coincides with the males and females that end up on the

streets because there is no one home to supervise them.

These students have "socioemotional problems, including

drug use, pregnancy, and intolerable family conditions,

that make continuation in school difficult" (LeCompte &

Goebel, 1987, p. 263). They then are vulnerable to falling

victims to peer pressure for drugs, illegal extra

curricular activities and also sex.

Some of the females who drop out due to pregnancy are also some of the same students living in a single parent home. Dr. Smink, a recognized national leader and authority on dropout prevention agrees with this idea by emphasizing, that the young person is not at-risk, but only in one or more at-risk situations. He describes an at-risk situation as existing "in communities with a high incidence of criminal activities or drug abuse and a prevalence of poverty and single parent households" (http://www.dropout prevention.org, 1990).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

When trying to uncover an answer to this national problem questions need to be taken into consideration such as: Who is dropping out? Is it more common among the male or female student population? Which grade has the highest dropout rate? Who is at risk of dropping out? Are the students at risk considered economically disadvantaged?

The research for the answers to these questions began by typing in keywords and information on the Internet. Next journals were searched by keyword at the CSUSB campus library. After searching journals, books were searched at the campus library also.

After reviewing all of the literature found on the internet, in the journals, and in the books, the focus of the paper was on the factors which can determine who is more likely to be a high school dropout according to previous statistics from schools across the United States.

The factors which recurred and were available in most of the texts were gender, race, and age. Other risk factors were also recurring and relevant such as where students live and how many parents are in the household.

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All of these factors were considered to be the main groups which high school dropouts can be classified under.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

After reviewing multiple pieces of literature on high school dropouts it has been determined that there are 3 major groups that students can be looked at on a statistical stance. These three major groups consist of gender, race, and the grade or age they are.

It was found that males are more likely to dropout in the first few years and girls are more likely to dropout in the last two years of high school.

It was found that minorities are the most likely to drop out, and Hispanics being the group with statistics higher than any other ethnic background.

The age or grade that a student is in also is a key factor in who drops out of school and when. Younger students were found to be less likely than older students, and the number of students enrolled in high school in the ninth grade is increased greatly by the time the students are in the twelfth grade.

There are multiple contributing factors such as where a student lives, how many parents are in the household, whether or not a student's family is economically

disadvantaged or not, and even the case of high school
students becoming parents before graduation. All of these
factors very much determine whether a student will be
successful in school, and long enough to graduate.

There are possible solutions to help prevent students
from dropping out, such as informing students of their
rights, or even involving the parents with the teachers on
a more regular basis, or building day care centers for
those who become young parents.

Schools should be aware of the classifications which
students can be placed in as more likely to become dropouts
and then intervene in order to help prevent the epidemic
from continuing to grow.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Conclusion and Discussion of the Study

After close review of the literature some prevention

methods were identified by E. Gregory Woods. These specific

programs are generated from Bickel, et al 1986, Dryfoos

1990, National Diffusion Network (NDN) 1993, Orr 1987, and

U.S. Department of Education 1993. The programs are focused

on students about to enter high school or currently in high

school.

- The Adopt-A-Student Program, operating in Atlanta,
  Georgia since 1983, pairs business volunteers as
  mentors with low-achieving high school juniors and
  seniors in a career-oriented support system. Students
  are helped to think about future employment, identify
  occupational interests, and begin taking steps to get
  a job that matches them. One result has been an
  increase in the graduation rate in contrast to a
  comparison group of non-participants. (Orr 1987;
  Dryfoos 1990)

- Project Coffee in Oxford, Massachusetts targets
  potential dropouts from 16 regional school districts.
  Components of the program include: comprehensive
  vocational instruction, integration of academics and
  occupational training, counseling, job training and
  work experience, and a school-business and industry
  partnership. Outcomes include improved attendance,
  increased basic skills competencies, and a lower
  dropout rate. (Orr 1987)

- The Alternative Schools Network in Chicago, Illinois
  targets neighborhood school dropouts. Community-based
  alternative schools and youth centers provide a
  structured program of education, including GED
  preparation, employment preparation, job training and
  counseling. The program illustrates an effective way
  for community-based organizations to target the needs
  of youth dropouts in their neighborhoods and to work
  together in raising funds and designing a focused
  program. A 60-70 percent high school/GED completion
  rate has been reported. (Orr 1987)

- Washington State-Funded Educational Clinics are local
  centers designed to provide short-term educational
  intervention services to dropouts aged 13-19. In

addition to basic academic skills instruction taught in small groups or individually, the clinics provide employment orientation, motivational development, and support services. Sixty-six percent of the students successfully complete the program by obtaining a GED, transferring into another educational program, or obtaining full-time work. (Orr 1987)

- City-As-School (CAS) is an independent alternative high school program that combines academic learning with the world of work for students in New York City. Students learn in specialized small classes which utilize community resources of a business, civic, cultural, social or political nature. Weekly seminar groups serve as a forum for discussions of guidance, academic and social issues. Evidence of program effectiveness is an increase in the course completion rate of students. (NDN 1993)

- The Lincoln Educational Alternative Program (LEAP) in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin is an alternative educational program nested within a larger, traditional high school. For juniors who are "credit deficient and unlikely to graduate," this two-semester program combines intense academic and counseling work

on social as well as academic skills. Classes are small, and there is a conscious effort to build group unity among the students involved. Improved rates of graduation are reported among participants. (Bickel, et al. 1986)

- An example of a system-wide, multi-component program to reduce the dropout rate operates in School District 60 in Pueblo, Colorado. The schools serve a working-class community where half the students are Hispanic. Early identification and intervention (as early as preschool) are high priorities, facilitated by a computerized tracking system. The program involves parents, and mentoring by volunteer adults and peers is stressed. Components include a teen mother program and a program for dropout reentry for all students. Rules on suspension have been changed: students who commit minor disciplinary offenses are isolated for up to five days and monitored by a supervisor. Resource teachers spend their time counseling and supporting students and their families. The dropout rates fell significantly in the school system during the two-year period reported. The retention rate for Hispanics

showed marked improvement, with greater changes than those noted for other students. (Dryfoos 1990)

- Upward Bound, a national program in operation since 1965, provides academic and other kinds of assistance to economically disadvantaged, underachieving students who show potential for completing college. Colleges and universities or secondary schools with residential facilities operate Upward Bound programs in cooperation with high schools and community action programs. Intervention strategies include: remedial instruction, immersion in new curricula, tutoring that often extends into the school year, cultural enrichment activities, and counseling. During summer sessions students reside in campus housing and undergo intensive training for six weeks or longer. Evaluations of the program conclude that Upward Bound is successful in getting students to graduate from high school. (U.S. Department of Education 1993)

- At George Washington Preparatory High School, located in south-central Los Angeles, both parents and students are required to sign a contract. Parents must attend workshops on how to help their children and must visit the schools at designated times. Teachers

must make daily calls to the homes of absentees. Absenteeism was less than 10 percent in the 1985-86 school year, and 70 percent of the students now go on to college. (U.S. Department of Education 1993)

- The New York City Dropout Prevention Program focuses on the transition from junior high to senior high school, a stress point in the lives of adolescents that contributes to dropping out. The high schools have become social institutions which provide help for students and their families. Using a team approach, the resources of public and private agencies provide adolescents with support. Parents are an integral part of the program and are considered central to success. Overall, the philosophy is to provide adolescents with caring adults who understand their needs and who will support them. Implemented programs include flexible schedules, job development and placement for seniors, incentives for those who show effort and achievement, part-time employment that helps students achieve the transition from school to work, and tutoring and mentoring of younger at-risk students by older ones. Two years after the program was put into place the

dropout rate went from 42 percent in 1985 to 30

percent in 1987. (U.S. Department of Education 1993)

Other possible solutions to students dropping out of

high school are to have information sessions to inform

parents of their child's behavior and to stress the

importance of their involvement, a push for students to

lean towards and become involved in extra curricular

activities as well as opening childcare centers on campus

for the young parents. One school in Texas has done this

and has been successful. This allows the mother and father

to continue going to school and not have the burden of

being without a babysitter or having the money for one.

Many schools are currently implementing these types of

programs already, but there is always room for more.

One Texas school district has a program that works

well for students who become parents,

"DVISD's (Del Valle Independent School District)

childcare program provides an important and needed

service to the surrounding community. There is only

one other licensed childcare provider in the

community, so the district-sponsored program enables

parents to work and/or attend classes without worrying

about their children. The program enables teenage

parents to finish high school while their child is in

the childcare center"

(http://www.cpa.state.tx.us/tspr, 2001).

There should be better communication between the students

and their parents as well as with the schools. Schools can

emphasize support programs, encourage parent-teacher

meetings, have actual human contact over the phone, and

encourage students to become more involved with extra

curricular activities such as sports, music or theatre.

All of these options are available but many students do not

have the encouragement from others or the knowledge about

such programs and therefore are affected in a negative way.

Prevention is a technique, which can be used to,

"anticipate, forestall, or deal with cognitive, social or

personal problems before they irreparably impair a

student's ability to perform," (http://aypf.org, 1995).

Unfortunately, we are looking into the causes of dropouts

while it is happening, whereas it should be investigated at

the earliest age possible. Most of the risk factors

touched on in this research can be identified as early as

the preschool years.

If school faculty and parents join together, there would be a noticeable decrease in the number of students leaving school before graduation. Students are ill informed of how important their education is and there are too few teachers and parents enforcing the importance or guidance needed and therefore outside temptation factors increase. The main problem seems to be a lack of funds for America's schools. If there was more money then these successful programs could be implemented and we would see a significant increase of the number of students graduating each year.

Student's Rights

Most students are unaware that they have rights in high school. Many of these students are silenced and even pushed out of school due to their behavior or poor attendance, (Mahood, 1981, p. 65). In one school studied by Fine, students "rarely learned of their legal entitlement to compulsory education, to an exit interview, or to not being failed or discharged because of truancy or suspension" (1991 p. 66). The staff at the school may tend to make the students feel that they have no other choice than to leave school before they graduate and secure a

living with some sort of employment. The students
generally are termed "overage" and are reported as dropouts
rather than reporting that the school pushed them out.

One way of possibly decreasing the dropout rates is to
inform students of their rights as well as their parents',
(Bennett deMarrais, & LeCompte, 1999). Many parents are
naïve to the way that the school system works. They too
are silenced by the school district and unable to voice
their opinions or be heard and they fail to fight for their
children because they tend to be rational and respectful of
what the school decides is best for the student even if it
is not in the student's best interest.

Goals

The goal of this project is to find determining
factors as to who is dropping out and why and then use that
information to prevent the numbers from growing on a year
to year basis. In this project, ideas of possible
intervention and future prevention are named. Once the
problems have been identified, possible solutions can be
developed. Such solutions could consist of more childcare
centers on campus, one on one conference with parents when
teachers are aware of an at-risk student, phone calls home,

and something as simple as passing out pamphlets with valuable information to help students. This project is intended to give information that is vital in determining which students are more likely to drop out and why and then what can be done in the future to prevent this epidemic from continuing. Once parents, teachers and other important school staff and cities understand how serious the problem of high school students dropping out is, an effort should be made to raise or acquire funds to promote programs to help the students as well as their parents. It is important for parents and teachers to be involved in the lives of the students, as hard as the task may be it is the difference in whether or not our children will graduate. Students are young and unaware of possible solutions to their problems. It should be the responsibility of the parents and school faculty to address any problems and offer the students their assistance.

CHAPTER SIX

A PLAN TO HELP REDUCE DROPOUTS

If a school wants to reduce the number of dropouts my suggestion would be that they do the following:

1. Schools should make parents aware of the importance of a prevention program and why it is necessary to contact the White House or congress.

2. Schools should write an official letter to either the White House or Congress or both and include this letter in the initial school enrollment packet and make it mandatory for the parents to sign.

3. Mail the letters in bulk to get the attention of the President and to present the seriousness of the issue.

4. Do this process every year at least once.

After reviewing all of the above literature I have come to conclude that the amount of money in schools will be a determining factor in the success of America's students. I suggest that it should be a requirement for parents to sign a letter requesting funds for prevention programs to the White House and congress as well when they enroll their students each year. There is an example

letter to the White House in Appendix A (p. 36). The government needs to see concerned parents and an overwhelming response from parents to the Government may be the answer to this problem. Once schools have received the money they need, the programs mentioned above can be implemented and the number of students dropping out will decrease. According to the school the best programs will differ in nature. Each school should be allowed to test which ever solution they think meets the needs of their students.

This letter to the White House or to congress is a vital factor. By sending the letters parents are being informed and involved with the school and the best interests of the students and a society is speaking out for the future generations in great numbers. The President will understand how extremely important some of the programs are in keeping students in school and there is a great possibility that a bill will pass for educational funds.

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO THE WHITE HOUSE

LETTER TO THE WHITE HOUSE

mm/dd/yyyy

To:
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

From:
Concerned Parent
Parent Address
High School
School District
State

To President Bush,

Students are dropping out of high school in alarming numbers each year. The problem is a very concerning epidemic. It is important for high schools to incorporate programs that offer but are not limited to tutoring, counseling for parents and students, childcare and career preparedness programs in order to prevent the numbers from growing and to put a stop to the epidemic.

The reasons why students drop out vary between gender and ethnicity as well as society and family factors. There are multiple options in addressing the problem and then preventing it but the cost of the programs which will be successful require funds that this school needs.

It is necessary for the Government to provide funding to our high school for these programs to be achievable. This is a request for 10 billion dollars to be invested over the next 10 years for America's schools. Our students are important and it is necessary that we fund programs to keep them in school long enough to graduate and be successful and productive citizens.

Sincerely,
High School Parent

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