



REPRESENTATIVE CATHY MUNOZ

SPONSOR STATEMENT HB33

Alaska currently faces one of the highest declining graduation rates in the country. According to recent statistics from the Alaska Commission on Post Secondary Education, thirty-eight percent of students in the ninth grade will not have a diploma in ten years. Alaska Department of Labor estimates that four-thousand Alaskans ages 16-19 are unemployed and not in school; and 57,000 Alaskans across Alaska do not have a diploma. Alaska's drop-out rate is double the national average based on statistics from the U.S. Department of Education.

HB33 changes the compulsory school attendance age so that a student is compelled to stay in school until the age of eighteen. Current law requires compulsory school attendance from the age of seven to sixteen. All exemptions from compulsory attendance currently in Alaska statute, including homeschoolers, would remain exempt from this change. This bill will not affect any current statute that allows for early graduation, and relieves the requirement of compulsory attendance to the age of eighteen if those requirements are met.

Students at risk should not have the option of leaving school at a critical age when judgment and maturation development is most critical to their personal success. It has been established through extensive research that the more education a person receives, the more earning potential one gains. As the drop out rate of Alaskan students increase, so does the direct and indirect cost to the State of Alaska. Unemployment, criminal behavior, and dependence on the State's social services are examples of this increased cost.

HB33 is designed to improve Alaska's public education system. The intent of this legislation is to be one of several important first steps toward a long term solution. The young people of Alaska deserve our very best effort. Elevating the age of compulsory attendance in our education system will become an important new commitment we can make on behalf of all of our young citizens at a crucial time in their education and lives.

HOUSE BILL NO. 33

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE MUÑOZ

Introduced: 1/20/09

Referred: Education, Finance

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act relating to compulsory school attendance; and providing for an effective date."**

2 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

3 * **Section 1.** AS 14.30.010(a) is amended to read:

4 (a) Every child between seven and 18 [16] years of age shall attend school at
5 the public school in the district in which the child resides during each school term.
6 Every parent, guardian or other person having the responsibility for or control of a
7 child between seven and 18 [16] years of age shall maintain the child in attendance at
8 a public school in the district in which the child resides during the entire school term,
9 except as provided in (b) of this section.

10 * **Sec. 2.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
11 read:

12 **APPLICABILITY.** The changes made to AS 14.30.010(a) by sec. 1 of this Act do not
13 apply to children who are 16 or 17 years of age who have been officially dropped from public
14 school enrollment in the state on or before the effective date of this Act.

15 * **Sec. 3.** This Act takes effect July 1, 2009.



Position Statement on HB 33 Compulsory School Attendance

School boards believe that 16-year-olds are not ready to make the enormous decision to give up a high school education. Increasing the mandatory attendance age from 16 to 18 helps ensure that students who have not yet graduated from high school and are too young to make the life-changing decision to forego basic education will stay in school and have more opportunities to meet performance standards and pass the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. AASB believes that the best way to keep students in school is to fund and provide education programs that engage students.



Anchorage School District

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99504-3135
(907) 742-4000

February 27, 2009

Dear Representative *Cathy* Munoz:

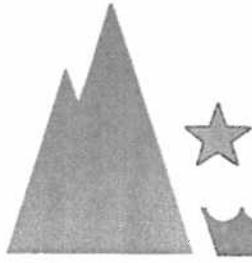
I am writing this in strong support for HB 33 that recommends increasing the age of compulsory education to age 18. Our School Board and the majority of our staff and community strongly believe it is time for this change. The rationale in your sponsor's statement makes the case very clearly.

Our graduation rate is only 64 % and we are striving to increase that number with many new initiatives that support students. Our drop out rate has dropped from 6.48% in the 2004-2005 school year to 4.16% during the 2007-2008 school year. One of the identified causes of students dropping out if they are disengaged in high school is "they can". We try many different strategies to encourage young people to stay in school and we believe that if they knew they had to stay in school until age 18 or passing all the graduation requirements to qualify for a diploma, they would do so. Too many of our students, particularly those from immigrant families and families on the edge of economic survival, are pressured to go to work to help support their family. We believe that young people should know how important a high school diploma is to their future success. Our new graduation coaches are connecting with students and families in an effort to re-engage them in their education; this effort is often hampered by the fact that Alaskan students can drop out at age 16.

We strongly support your legislation and will be happy to testify in favor of the legislation when it is ready for a hearing. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely yours,

Carol Comeau
Superintendent



JUNEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

10014 CRAZY HORSE DRIVE · JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801-8529 · (907) 523-1700

February 25, 2009

Dear Representative Munoz,

Please know how appreciative our district is for your attention to the urgent issue of dropping out of high school in Alaska.

In the past, such legislation has been miscast as a threat to parental rights. It is, in fact, the opposite of that: it is a parent empowerment bill. As a former high school administrator, I have witnessed the anguish of parents when their minor child dropped out and the parent had no authority to stop it. In Alaska, parents have control over their minor's drivers license until age 18; why not their child's education?

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development 2007 statistics tell us that 1 in 3 Alaskan youth are not getting a high school diploma. The data are even more startling for special education students (60 percent not graduating) and students of Alaska Native heritage (37 percent not graduating).

These data are significant because of the irrefutable correlation between dropping out of high school and several other factors which ultimately translate into a drag on the economy: incarceration (80 percent of inmates are high school drop outs); poverty and, thus, the need for public assistance (and, poverty has a direct correlation to multiple health issues which, in turn, drain state coffers of public health dollars); and the attainment of a diploma by the next generation (mother's education has direct bearing on whether a child will graduate). So, under-education has systemic, persistent, generational negative effect on public revenues.

Alaska is not the only state to recognize the significant impact of the diploma. According to the Education Commission of the States, more than half of all states require that students be 17 or 18 to graduate or to have completed all necessary credits.

How disingenuous is it for our leaders to decry the drop out rate and not take the sensible and simple step of telling minors: finish school or wait until you're of the age of majority to make that momentous and life-altering decision to not finish?

Drop outs cost the State of Alaska real public dollars. This bill is a cost-savings measure, as well as an accountability measure. If federal and state laws hold schools accountable for educating and graduating our youth, then please hold youth accountable for staying in school.

Thank you for your consideration and support of this important measure.

Sincerely,

Lauri Scandling
Assistant Superintendent
Juneau School District



CORDOVA SCHOOL DISTRICT

PO Box 140 * 100 Fisherman Avenue
Cordova, Alaska 99574-0140
(907) 424-3265 * FAX (907) 424-3271

Cordova Jr/Sr High School
(907) 424-3266
FAX (907) 424-5215

Mt. Eccles Elementary
(907) 424-3236
FAX (907) 424-3117

February 11, 2009

Dear Representative Munoz,

I am writing this letter in support of HB 33. As Superintendent of Schools, I struggle with the staggering statistics proving that nearly 40% of Alaskan youth will not graduate from high school this coming year. Current statute (allowing students to drop out at age 16) is outdated and opens the door for youth that are still in need of structure and direction that our public schools offer in Alaska. With Alaska's drop out rate double the national average HB 33 will be a huge step in the right direction for this great state!

Unemployment, criminal behavior, and increased taxing on Alaska's social services are directly related to the exodus of youth choosing not to attend schools. Unfortunately many of those that drop out are bright students simply lacking good judgment and critical maturation necessary in such decision-making efforts.

Finally, with the quality of life exponentially better in today's world with a high school diploma, this legislation is one of several important steps towards the long-term solution of our lacking graduation success.

I look forward to its successful passage!

Sincerely,

Superintendent of Schools
Cordova School District



Grand Camp
Alaska Native Brotherhood

RESOLUTION NO. #23-08

TITLE: EXTENSION OF THE ALASKAN COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LAW

WHEREAS, Over 3000 Alaskan students drop out each year representing the highest drop out rate in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Alaskan minority students experience the highest percentage of drop out amongst all students with Alaskan Native students double the rate of others at 14%; and

WHEREAS, To compete in the 21st century all students need at a minimum to stay in school long enough to finish a high school diploma; and

WHEREAS, Studies show that students without a high school diploma earn less than 75% of those with a diploma and are more likely to live in poverty over the course of their lifetimes; and

WHEREAS, Alaska's mandatory compulsory school attendance is from 7 to 16 years of age; and

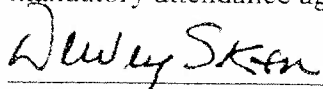
WHEREAS, Only 27 states allow students to drop out at the age of 16; and

WHEREAS, The national trend is moving toward extension of the mandatory school age to 18 years of age; and

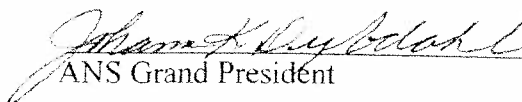
WHEREAS, The National Education Association as a top priority is recommending high school graduation or the equivalency as compulsory for everyone below the age of 21 years of age; and

WHEREAS, Raising the high school drop out age from 16 to 18 will reduce the drop out rate.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alaska Native Brotherhood and the Alaska Native Sisterhood Grand Camp in convention at Ketchikan, Alaska during the week of October 7-11, 2008 hereby urges the Alaska Legislature to adopt legislation that would extend the mandatory attendance age for all Alaskan students to the age of 18 years.




ANB Grand President



ANS Grand President

ATTEST: I certify that this resolution was adopted by the ANB/ANS Grand Camp in convention at Ketchikan, Alaska during the week of October 7-11, 2008.



ANB Grand Secretary



NEA-ALASKA

Affiliated with the National Education Association

February 23, 2009

Rep. Cathy Munoz
State of Alaska
State Capital
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Rep Munoz:

NEA-Alaska supports HB 33, a raise in the age of compulsory school attendance to eighteen for Alaska's children. Truancy and dropout rates are too high and we believe every effort should be made to encourage our youth to become as fully educated as possible. Raising the age of mandatory school attendance may serve to keep students in school longer than they now stay. If this bill causes even one child to complete their education it will be worthwhile.

Further, the annual Delegate Assembly of members in January 2009 passed a resolution which states:

NEA-Alaska believes the Legislature should establish penalties for non-compliance with Alaska's compulsory attendance laws.

It is our belief that a law with no teeth serves little purpose. Alaska's school employees work hard to offer our children opportunities which prepare them for life. We cannot fulfill the promise of a high quality education for Alaska's children if they are not in our classrooms.

Thank you for sponsoring this piece of legislation and the work you do on behalf of Alaska's future.

Respectfully,

Barb Angaiak
President

Terry Harvey

From: kelsey Clark [kelseyclark_03@hotmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 9:34 PM
To: Terry Harvey
Subject: Testimonial for HB33

Terry Harvey,
I would be honored to testify in support of the compulsory attendance bill HB33. I feel that Alaska's drop out rate needs to be addressed and this would be the perfect opportunity to help solve the problem. I also want to thank you again for allowing the Unalaska School Board to meet with Representative Cathy Muñoz. Our meeting with her went very well, and on behalf of my school board I would like to thank you for listening to our comments and inputs. In the mean time feel free to contact me about any questions or needed information that you will need to know for me to testify. Also just to let you know I will be out of town till the 23rd of February.

Sincerely,
Kelsey Clark

Windows Live™: Keep your life in sync. [See how it works.](#)



**A Joint Resolution between
Anchorage Faith & Action – Congregations Together
and
Anchorage Chamber of Commerce
Resolution 2006/07-06**

WHEREAS, more than 6,000 students were suspended in the 2005-06 school year in the Anchorage School District; and

WHEREAS, more than 90 students were expelled during the 2005-06 school year in the Anchorage School District, and

WHEREAS, the dropout rate in grades 7-12 during the 2005-06 school year was 6.3% in the Anchorage School District, and

WHEREAS, a high school dropout is likely to earn one-half as much as a high school graduate; and

WHEREAS, a high school dropout is three times more likely to live in poverty than a high school graduate;

WHEREAS, the Municipality of Anchorage Community Youth Violence Gang Response Team named the lack of supervision of students who are expelled from school as a critical issue in the community; and

WHEREAS, unsupervised youth and rising youth violence in Anchorage are critical concerns of the both the faith and business communities; and

WHEREAS, current Alaska law (AS 14.30.10) makes school attendance compulsory only until the age of 16; and

WHEREAS, current Alaska law exempts students who have been suspended or expelled from compulsory education; and

WHEREAS, programs for long-term suspended and expelled students are voluntary in Anchorage; and

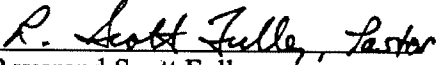
WHEREAS, on November 27, 2006, School Superintendent Carol Comeau and Mayor Mark Begich committed to AFACT before more than 400 people that they would include in their 2007 Legislative Agenda a request that the compulsory education age be raised to 18, or receiving a high school diploma, and education be made compulsory for long-term suspended and expelled students,

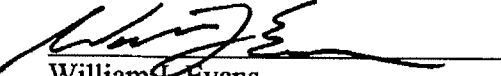
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature and Governor Palin are encouraged to amend Alaska law by raising the compulsory education age to 18 or the achievement of a high school diploma; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that State and Local entities are encouraged to consider the implications of this resolution and to provide separate facilities and funding from local, state and federal sources for compulsory education for long-term suspended and expelled students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature and Governor Palin are encouraged to amend Alaska law by making education compulsory for long-term suspended and expelled students and to provide adequate funding to establish appropriate programs.

DATED this 3 day of March 2007.


Reverend Scott Fuller
Anchorage Faith & Action –
Congregations Together, Board Chair


William J. Evans
Anchorage Chamber of Commerce
Board Chair

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

MARCH 10, 2009



REPORT NUMBER 09.172

COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE AND STATISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH EDUCATION LEVELS

PREPARED FOR REPRESENTATIVE CATHY MUÑOZ

BY TIM SPENGLER, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

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You asked for information about compulsory school attendance age laws and statistics associated with education levels. Specifically, you were interested in the following:

- ◆ The compulsory school attendance age in different states;
- ◆ Arguments surrounding raising the compulsory school attendance ages from 16 to 18;
- ◆ Alaska's compulsory school age law and recent legislative efforts to change the law;
- ◆ Lifetime earning potential by education level; and

- ◆ The difference in incarceration rates between high school graduates and dropouts, and associated costs.

COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE IN THE UNITED STATES

Compulsory school attendance refers to the ages through which children are required to attend school. For this report, we focus on the maximum compulsory school attendance age requirements. Alaska Statute 14.30.010 mandates that, “Every child between seven and 16 years of age shall attend school . . .” According to a report by the Education Commission of the States (ECS), as of July 2007, 23 other states had a maximum compulsory age of 16.¹ In eight states, the maximum compulsory age is 17, while the 18 remaining states require students to attend school until they are 18 years of age.² In the table below, we display the maximum age requirements for compulsory school attendance across the nation.

Table 1: Compulsory School Attendance Age in the United States

Students Required to Attend School Until 16 (24 states)
Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, ¹ Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, ¹ West
Students Required to Attend School Until 17 (8 states)
Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee
Students Required to Attend School Until 18 (18 states and D.C.)
California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin
Notes: (1) Students are exempted from compulsory attendance requirements upon completion of 10th grade.
Source: Education Commission of the States, www.ecs.org .

¹ We include ECS's, “Compulsory School Age Requirements,” as Attachment A.

² Most states allow parents to petition their local school board or principal for a waiver of these requirements under certain circumstances, such as enrollment in a vocational education program or an institution of higher education or early completion of required coursework. The great majority of states waive compulsory attendance requirements for high school graduates regardless of their age. In Alaska, and many states, youth who are homeschooled by their parents or guardians are not subject to compulsory education statutes.

ARGUMENTS SURROUNDING RAISING COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGES

When compulsory schooling laws were originally enacted around the country—for the majority of states this occurred between 1870-1910—policy makers assumed that finishing high school was not a necessity. In the primarily agrarian economy of that time period, a high school diploma was not a prerequisite to achieving a good job and having a successful and productive life. Times have changed radically since these laws were initially enacted and now four times more Americans live in urban settings than reside in rural environs.³ With the urbanization of our country, non-agricultural jobs have become much more prevalent. By and large, these are jobs that require more education than those of the 19th century. The importance of higher education has only increased as we have moved into the increasingly high tech environment of the 21st century.

The discrepancy between the earnings for high school dropouts and those with diplomas is pronounced. Well paying employment opportunities are not readily available to high school dropouts. Those in favor of raising the compulsory school attendance age argue that when most high-wage, high-growth jobs require a *college* degree, it does not make sense for states to make it easier for students to dropout prior to getting a *high school* degree.

Many of the sources we consulted for this report stress that allowing 16 years olds the choice to opt out of school is poor educational and social policy. It is argued that teenagers are not usually equipped to make informed decisions that will potentially affect their whole lives. Not only does this critical decision affect the youth involved, it also has significant impact on society at large. Along with weaker earning potential, dropouts also become incarcerated at a significantly higher rate. We compare the earning potential and incarceration rates of dropouts and graduates later in this report.

A 2007 report funded by Gates Foundation, entitled, “Raising the Compulsory School Attendance Age: The Case for Reform,” argues that that raising the compulsory attendance age can benefit graduation rates.⁴ The report concludes this should be done in conjunction with providing alternative learning opportunities and other educational reforms. Mary McNaught, chief of staff at Civic Enterprises, the entity that produced the study, maintains that allowing teenagers to leave school at 16 sends a dangerous message to youth.⁵ She contends that permitting this option statutorily is unwise given all we know about the rough road dropouts face. Ms. McNaught acknowledges that there is currently a scarcity of data linking raising the compulsory age limit and increased graduation rates. Nonetheless, she believes common sense dictates that raising the compulsory school age is a prudent step in the right direction.

Opponents of raising compulsory attendance ages hold that requiring all young people under the age of 18 to attend school can marginalize those who fare least well in traditional high school. Additionally, some argue that forcing young people to attend school when they are unwilling disrupts the learning opportunities for others. The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is staunchly against raising mandatory age limits. The HSLDA argue in a November

³ *Mini-historical statistics: Population characteristics*, U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/statab/hist/HS-02.pdf>.

⁴ We include, “Raising the Compulsory School Attendance Age: The Case for Reform,” as Attachment B.

⁵ Mary McNaught can be reached at (202) 467-8908.

2007 issue analysis, "Raising the Compulsory Attendance Age Fails to Achieve Significant Results," that such legislation results in an increase in government spending and taxation, as well as a removal of parent's rights to make educational choices for their children. The document also asserts that there is no evidence that increasing the mandatory age limit will increase graduation rates.⁶

Dr. Jay Smink, executive director of the National Dropout Center, believes that raising the compulsory school age *might* be a good idea. He cautions, however, that raising the compulsory age without identifying struggling students and providing them with alternative learning opportunities, would result in no benefit.⁷ He strongly cautions against viewing raising the compulsory age as a "silver bullet."

It is difficult to ascertain whether raising the compulsory school attendance age makes a clear difference in dropout and graduation rates. One of the primary difficulties in discerning a connection is that states collect and report dropout and graduation data in different ways. A national movement aims to eventually standardize graduation and dropout data, and this will likely make comparisons useful. At this point, however, it is virtually impossible to make accurate and reliable comparisons, according to all the sources we reviewed.

The only study we found that examines the impact of measures raising the required school age was produced by Canada's C.D. Howe Institute.⁸ This December 2005 study entitled, "Stay in School: New Lessons on the Benefits of Raising the Legal School Leaving Age," looked at youth in both New Brunswick, Canada (which had raised its required school age to 18 in 2000), and in the United States. The main objective of the study was to ascertain whether New Brunswick's policy was proving effective and whether the other provinces in Canada should enact similar laws. While the study found no change in the relative dropout rate in New Brunswick, it did find small positive effects in the United States. The study estimates that raising the mandatory maximum school age above 16 would:

- ◆ increase, on average, an individual's length of schooling by between 0.12 and 0.16 years;
- ◆ decrease the dropout rate by between 1.2 and 2.1 percentage points; and
- ◆ increase the percentage of young adults with at least some college or university by between 1.5 and 2.1 percentage points.

While these gains are modest, they do indicate that raising the age of maximum compulsory school attendance may be of value. We include the paper as Attachment C.

⁶ "Raising the Compulsory Attendance Age Fails to Achieve Significant Results," can be viewed at <http://www.hslda.org/docs/nche/000010/200205130.asp>.

⁷ Dr. Smink can be reached at (864) 656-2450. More information on the National Dropout Center can be found at <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/>.

⁸ The study claims to be the first of its kind in the last 20 to 30 years in North America. The C.D. Howe Institute describes itself as a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization that aims to improve Canadians' standard of living by fostering sound economic and social policy. More information on the entity can be found at <http://www.cdhowe.org/>. The author of the study, Philip Oreopoulos, is an assistant professor of economics at the University of Toronto.

ALASKA'S COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE LAW AND RECENT LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS TO CHANGE THE LAW

Even during territorial days—in fact since 1929—the maximum compulsory school age in Alaska has always been 16.⁹ While there have been a few changes to AS 14.30.010 in the ensuing years, no changes have been made to the maximum age requirement.

There have been a few efforts in the recent past to raise the maximum mandatory school age. In 2006, House Bill (HB) 345, which would have raised the compulsory age to 17, did not make it out of the House education committee. Senate Bill (SB) 14, which would have raised the compulsory attendance age to 18, suffered a similar fate in the Senate in 2008. As you know, there are currently bills in both the Senate (SB 102) and House (HB 33) that would also raise the compulsory school attendance age to 18.

EARNING POTENTIAL BY EDUCATION LEVEL

According to U.S Census Bureau figures, there is nearly a \$10,000 difference between the annual income of a high school graduate (or equivalent) and a dropout. This difference increases the farther along in college an individual progresses. Table 2 shows estimated annual average incomes by educational attainment in 2007.

Table 2: Estimated Annual Earnings by Educational Attainment, 2007

High School Dropout	High School Graduate (or Equivalent)	Some College or Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
\$19,089	\$26,712	\$32,793	\$46,277	\$61,014

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey, found through <http://www.factfinder.census.gov>.

While the economic benefit of staying in school is obvious from the table above, the impact on the nation at large is also noteworthy. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, if all the students who dropped out of the class of 2008 had graduated, the nation's economy would have benefitted from an additional \$319 billion in income over the graduates' lifetimes.¹⁰ The Alliance estimates that in Alaska alone, if the projected number of nongraduates for the class of 2008 (3,865) had, in fact, not dropped out, their lifetime additional income would be over a billion dollars. We include, as Attachment D, "The High Cost of High School Dropouts, What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools." The article also explains how high school graduates benefit the nation socially as well as economically. Lower teen pregnancies and a higher likelihood of raising healthier, better educated children themselves are among the benefits discussed.

⁹ Chapter 97, Article 12, Laws of Alaska, 1929.

¹⁰ The Alliance for Excellent Education is a Washington-based policy, research, and advocacy organization concerned with improving graduation rates and preparing youth for postsecondary education. More information is available at <http://www.all4ed.org>.

INCARCERATION RATES AND ASSOCIATED COSTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AND DROPOUTS

According to the organization Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, high school dropouts are three and one-half times more likely to be arrested, and more than eight times more likely to be incarcerated, than high school graduates.¹¹ “School or the Streets, Crime and America’s Dropout Crisis,” Fight Crime contends that across the country, 68 percent of state prison inmates have not received a high school diploma.¹² According to this report, if graduation rates improved by 10 percent, murder and assault rates would be reduced by about 20 percent. Increasing the nation’s graduation rate from an estimated 71 percent to 81 percent, therefore, would yield 400,000 more graduates annually and avert more than 3,000 murders and almost 175,000 aggravated assaults each year. In Alaska, a ten percent increase in the graduation rate would prevent an estimated seven murders and 692 assaults each year, according to this study.

Crime is costly, certainly to the victims, but also economically to society at large. The Alliance for Excellent Education reported in 2006 that a modest five percent increase in the *male* high school graduation rate would produce an annual savings of nearly \$5 billion in crime-related expenses. Coupled with the increased annual earnings of those who graduated, the U.S. would realize around \$7.7 billion in benefits. California alone would realize over a billion dollars in benefits if graduation rates went up five percent for males. Alaska’s estimated total benefits would be over \$18 million.¹³

A University of California Berkeley study from 2004, also speaks to the enormous savings that would be reaped by increasing graduation rates.¹⁴ According to the report, a mere *one percent* increase in the high school completion rate of all men ages 20-60 in our country would save the United States as much as \$1.4 billion per year in reduced costs from crime incurred by victims and society at large. All the sources we reviewed concur that improving graduation rates will lower crime rates and improve the economic prospects for individuals, states, and our nation.

We hope you find this information to be useful. Please let us know if you have questions or need additional information.

¹¹ Fight Crime: Invest in Kid is a bipartisan, anti-crime organization of over 4,000 law enforcement leaders and crime survivors. Their study can be found at <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/fcik-dropout-nat.pdf>.

¹² We include “School or the Streets, Crime and America’s Dropout Crisis,” as Attachment E.

¹³ To view the estimated saving to all states if graduation rates for males were raised by five percent go to <http://www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/SavingFutures.pdf>.

¹⁴ The study, “The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Report,” can be viewed at <http://www.econ.berkeley.edu/~moretti/lm46.pdf>.

ATTACHMENT A

**“Raising the Compulsory School Attendance Age: The case for Reform”
2007, Civic Enterprises**

Attachment B

**“Stay In School: new Lessons On the Benefits of Raising the Legal
School –Leaving Age,” December 2005, Philip Oreopoulos, C.D. Howe
Institute**

Attachment C

ISER Publication –Kids Count Alaska Education Summary

Attachment D

NEA’s 12 Point Plan for Reducing the School Dropout Rate

Attachment E

“Understanding the Issue of the High school Dropout Age”

Attachment F

**“Alaska’s Dropout Rate Double US Average”
Anchorage Daily News 11-16-08**

Attachment G

**“Chugach Program Boast 98 Percent Graduation”
Anchorage Daily News 3-01-09**

Attachment H

**Legal Services Memo-Why Individual School Districts in Alaska Cannot
Raise Compulsory Age**

Attachment I

Notes on Juneau School District at Risk Programs

Attachment J

Truancy Report from Todd Brocius Dept of Education

ATTACHMENT A
“Raising the Compulsory School Attendance Age: The case for Reform”
2007, Civic Enterprises

RAISING THE COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE: THE CASE FOR REFORM

A Report by Civic Enterprises
with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation,
The Case Foundation and The MCJ Foundation

By: John M. Bridgeland
John J. DiIulio, Jr.
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Since the publication of *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, governors and state legislators have requested more information about one of our policy recommendations – to consider raising the compulsory school attendance age under state law from 16 or 17 to the age of 18, coupled with support for struggling students. In recent years, more and more states have been passing or introducing legislation to raise the compulsory school age. Many states have recognized that the original laws were passed 100 years ago or more when we had a very different economy. Today’s globally competitive economy requires at least a high school diploma and often additional education and training to provide the knowledge and skills needed for the 21st century. Good research also supports the view that increasing the compulsory school age can help decrease the dropout rate in schools. Notwithstanding the evidence, a majority of states still permit students to drop out before the age of 18.

We have published this report to provide to state and local leaders more information about the merits of raising the compulsory school age – including the latest research, compelling arguments, and examples of how other states are making progress – in order to strengthen the arsenal of tools states and communities have to combat the dropout epidemic.

THE DROPOUT PROBLEM

The United States has a dropout epidemic. Almost one-third of all public high school students – and one-half of African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans – fail to graduate from high school with their class. Most students drop out within just a few years of finishing school and often enter a life of poverty, crime, prison, and broken homes. Society also suffers from the loss of productivity and the higher costs of increased incarceration, health care and social services.

In our 2006 report, *The Silent Epidemic*, we shared the results of focus groups and a national survey of former students who had dropped out of high school. We also recommended concrete steps at the local, state and federal levels to address the dropout problem. While we face an epidemic in which the number of dropouts is unacceptably high, we also face an opportunity. Namely, the problem is not insurmountable, and we can make positive progress against it. One of the top reasons students gave for dropping out was that they had “too much freedom,” and many wished that their schools and parents had had higher expectations for them and had done more to keep them in classes each day. Another top reason was that they spent too much time with others who were not interested in school. Too much freedom combined with apathy about

“Every student in America should graduate from high school ready for college, career and life. Every child. No exceptions. Whether they are going off to college or into the work force or a combination of the two, it is the responsibility of public education to give our young people the skills, knowledge and preparation for life they need and deserve.”

– Bill Gates, testimony before Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, March 7, 2007

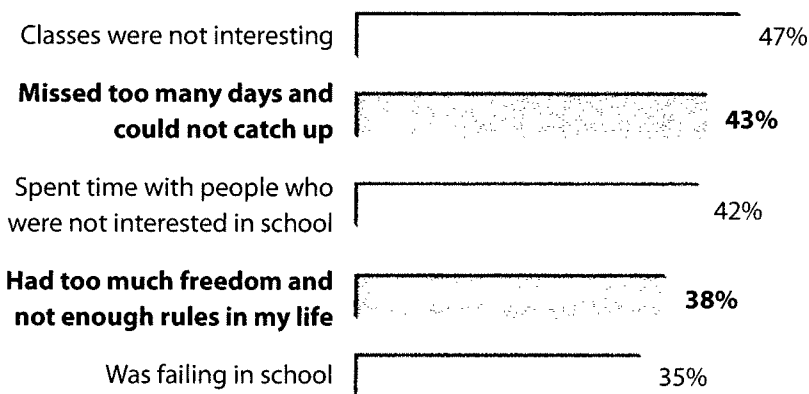
“Raising the minimum age for school attendance, if accompanied by real support for the wavering students, would do a lot to end ‘the silent epidemic.’”

– David Broder, *The Washington Post*, February 26, 2006 (See Appendix A)

school creates a potent mixture, increasing the chances that students will drop out. Nearly all of the dropouts we surveyed regretted the decision.

Our report recommended that states could help reduce the dropout rate by raising the compulsory school age under state law, coupled with more supports for struggling students. While this step alone will not solve the dropout epidemic, we believe based on best evidence that it can help.

Top Five Reasons Dropouts Identify as Major Factors For Leaving School



A POLICY FOR A BYGONE ERA

The majority of states allow students to drop out of high school when they are 16 or 17, before they have reached graduation age (see Appendix B). Most states enacted these compulsory school attendance laws between 1870-1910, a time when fewer than 10 percent of 17 year olds graduated from high school. In fact, fewer than 15 percent of 14-17 year olds were even enrolled in high school in any given year before 1910.¹ In an economy that was still significantly agrarian, a high school education was not a prerequisite to participating in the mainstream workforce. Fifty-two percent more Americans lived in rural than in urban areas in 1900. One hundred years later, the situation had changed entirely, and nearly four times more Americans live in urban than in rural areas.² And non-farm employment has increasingly required education over the past one hundred years as we have shifted from an economy in which the largest share of jobs has moved from the manufacturing to the services sector.³ Clearly, times have changed, though state laws have not always kept up. It is common knowledge that the U.S. economy needs college graduates. At a time when two-thirds of high-growth, high-wage jobs require a college degree and only one-third of Americans have college degrees, it makes little sense to us that

"I believe for me, like most people I know, most of them didn't graduate high school and whatever, and they was like you'd be talking like I can't wait until my 16th birthday so I didn't have to come back here no more. I mean I can't wait to drop out kind of thing."

Male focus group participant, Baltimore, 2006

state laws would continue to make it easy for students to avoid the prerequisite to college: a high school diploma.

THE UNHAPPY CONSEQUENCES OF THE STATUS QUO

Detractors might argue that students prone to dropping out of school will not go to college anyway, and therefore raising the compulsory school age will have little effect. Research indicates, however, that approximately one-quarter of potential dropouts remain in school because of compulsory school laws.⁴ In addition, overall enrollment rates among 16 year olds are lower in states that allow them to drop out when they turn 16.⁵ While it may be difficult to ascertain how many of those would choose to pursue a college education, it is more difficult to argue that they should be allowed to give up on school so easily before they are faced with that choice, especially in light of the fact that the vast majority of students who exercise the freedom to drop out of school later regret the decision and wish that their states and schools had had higher expectations of them. Faced with the reality of trying to get a job and raise a family, most students who dropped out wished they had remained in school.

Their concerns are merited – the economic consequences of dropping out are dramatic. In the United States, high school graduates earn 43 percent more than individuals without a high school diploma, and college graduates earn more than 150 percent – one and a half times – more. Median earnings for people who have not graduated from high school are currently a mere \$415 per week.⁶ Research has shown a 10 percent rise in earnings for people who simply stay in school one year longer.⁷ Over their lifetimes, female high school dropouts earn between \$120,000 and \$244,000 less than female graduates, and males \$117,000 to \$322,000 less than male graduates. College graduates earn between \$800,000 and \$1,387,000 more over their lifetimes than high school dropouts.⁸

Not only are earnings prospects bleak for dropouts who have jobs, but the prospect of having a job at all is not guaranteed: dropouts are much more likely to be unemployed. The unemployment rate among individuals who have not graduated from high school is 65 percent higher than it is for graduates and 3 times higher than it is for college graduates.⁹ Clearly, dropping out of high school is often equivalent to choosing a life of financial hardship. It also places a burden upon society as a whole. Annual public health costs for dropouts have been estimated at \$58 billion, and approximately \$10 billion could be saved each year in public assistance if all our students graduated from high school. A

What States Are Doing

"Our first step is to define more clearly an adequate education – what our students will need to know to succeed as citizens and to compete in today's economy. . . . In 1903, the New Hampshire legislature passed a law requiring young people to stay in school until age 16. Their goal was to make sure children didn't leave school without the basic education they needed to get good jobs and live better lives. The world today is very different than it was in 1903. Today a high school diploma is the minimum price of admission for most jobs. Yet 20 percent of our young people are dropping out of high school. These young people will not have the opportunities they deserve. Half a high school education is no longer enough. That is why we must increase our compulsory attendance age from 16 to 18."

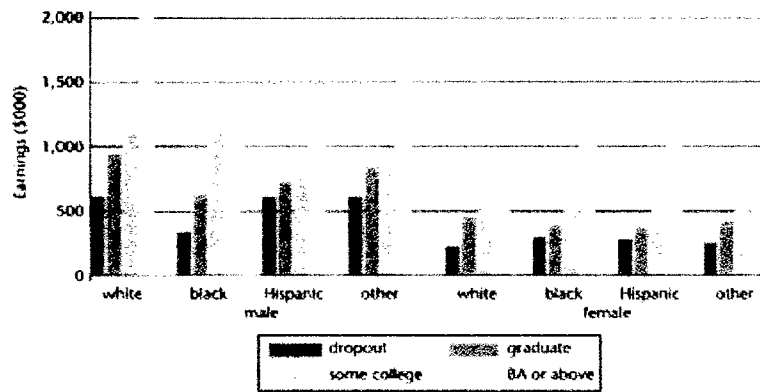
– New Hampshire Governor John Lynch, Inaugural Address, January 4, 2007

“Today, we require young people to remain in school only until they’re 16. That’s a system that made sense 100 years ago, when there were no calculators let alone computers; when doctors had no x-rays let alone genetic tests; when there was no national phone system let alone an Internet. In those days, a high school graduate could expect to find a decent job. Those days are gone. Of jobs that pay a realistic livable wage in Maricopa County, less than two percent are available to those with only a high school diploma. Less than two percent. My One Arizona Education Initiative would raise the dropout age from 16 to 18, and make funds available for tutoring, mentoring and special services to get these at-risk students back on track. The work force demands better graduates, and more of them.”

—Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, State of the State Address, January 8, 2007

10 percent increase in the high school completion rate would reduce the cost of crime by \$14 billion.¹⁰ One recent study has shown that cutting the current cohort of 20 year old dropouts in half would result in \$45 billion in added tax revenues and reduced public health, crime and welfare costs over the life of the cohort.¹¹

Lifetime Earnings by Education Level



Sources: Current Population Survey (March 2003 and 2004).
 Note: Earnings figures include all persons, i.e., persons with positive or zero income. Figures are adjusted for differences in attrition rates by education level (but not GED status). Productivity growth is assumed at 1.5% per year. Discount rate is 3.5%.

Levin, Henry, Clive Belfield, Peter Muenning, & Cecilia Rouse (2007). The costs and benefits of an excellent education for all of America’s children. Retrieved March 17, 2007, from Columbia University Web site: http://www.cbse.org/media/download_gallery/Leeds_Report_Final_Jan2007.pdf

IMPORTANT RESEARCH AND REPORTS RELATED TO COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

In addition to what the data tell us about the social and economic prospects for dropouts, important research suggests that raising the compulsory school age curtails dropout rates and produces other positive outcomes. The following studies are useful resources:

- Joshua Angrist and Alan Krueger find in their study, “Does Compulsory School Attendance Affect Schooling and Earnings?” that approximately one out of every four potential dropouts remains in school because of compulsory schooling laws. In addition, the study shows that states allowing students to drop out of school at 16 also have lower enrollment rates among 16 year olds. The authors also find support in their research for the view that students who attend school longer because of compulsory laws earn higher wages in

the future. The study can be found at: Joshua Angrist and Alan Krueger. "Does Compulsory School Attendance Affect Schooling and Earnings?" *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. V. CVI:4 (November 1991), 979-1014.¹²

- Philip Oreopoulos finds in his study, "Do Dropouts Drop Out Too Soon?" that students required to attend an extra year of schooling experience a 12 percent increase in earnings. In addition to increased earnings, the students are less likely to report being unemployed, having health problems, being depressed, and working in lower-skilled jobs. Oreopoulos shows that people with more schooling report higher levels of satisfaction with their lives overall, even when he controls for factors such as income. This study can be found at: Philip Oreopoulos. "Do Dropouts Drop Out Too Soon?" NBER Working Paper W10155 (December 2003). An updated working draft of the paper is available at <http://www.economics.utoronto.ca/oreo/research/dropouts/details.htm>.
- In their overview and survey of research on the importance of compulsory school ages, Hoor Bhanpuri and Ginger Reynolds find that raising the age is an important component of confronting the dropout problem. In their study, "Understanding and Addressing the Issue of the High School Dropout Age," the authors find evidence that raising the compulsory school age is gaining support across the United States in part because doing so helps reduce dropout numbers. The paper also provides a sampling of evidence-based interventions that help reduce the dropout rate. This study can be found at: Hoor Bhanpuri and Ginger Reynolds. "Understanding and Addressing the Issue of the High School Dropout Age." Learning Point Associates (2003).

Our 21st century realities cannot be sustained by 19th century policies, and for this reason, governors and state legislators across the United States are beginning to call for more rigorous standards and supports for students in an effort to graduate more young people from high school. Since the publication of *The Silent Epidemic* report, Civic Enterprises has been contacted by numerous state leaders seeking to do something about the dropout problem in their states. While they all understand that raising graduation rates requires a multi-pronged approach, they also understand that it is more difficult to address the problem if state law permits students to drop out of school before they reach graduation age and sends the message that they can do so.

"I am also introducing, once again, a bill so that a student may not leave school until they graduate or reach the age of 18. Students need to graduate in order to get better jobs and have a better quality of life for the rest of their lives. This change will also motivate the state and schools to provide better alternative schools and more educational opportunities for those young people who are now dropping out of school."

—South Dakota Governor Mike Rounds, State of the State Address, January 9, 2007

"Education is the single most important factor in the future prosperity of our state... Since 2003, we have seen vast improvements in education. Some of the most important gains have been in our students' graduation rate – which has increased seven and a half percent over the last four years... But today I make the same challenge as before: While we've seen terrific progress, we must do better."

—Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue, State of the State Address, January 10, 2007

"When one in four Hoosier kids drops out... we are not getting the job done. Formal education begins in kindergarten, but for successful lives today and tomorrow, it never ends. Family supporting jobs from now on will almost always require not merely a quality high school learning experience but continuing education beyond."

—Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels, *State of the State Address, January 11, 2007*

"The best economic development tool is an educated workforce. But too many of our kids are dropping out of high school. Our achievement gap is too wide, and we aren't doing enough to partner with teachers to help them improve student learning. My goal: to start us down a 10-year path of progress. Right now, about 30 percent of Colorado high school students don't graduate. Less than half of the black, Latino and American Indian students who start high school in Colorado actually finish. Less than half. Our goal: cut the drop-out rate in half within 10 years."

—Colorado Governor Bill Ritter, *State of the State Address, January 11, 2007*

A GROWING TREND

As much as the nation should be alarmed by the scope and gravity of America's dropout problem, we should also be encouraged by the leadership that states across the country are demonstrating to address it. Only 17 states and the District of Columbia require students to be in school until they are 18. We are witnessing a movement, however, among states to raise their compulsory school attendance ages and provide more supports to struggling students.

Governors and state policymakers understand that their states' economic future and the dropout problem are related, and they are taking action. Many current state efforts to keep young people in school are dealing with the compulsory school age, because there is a growing, shared understanding that raising the age requirement is also a way to raise expectations among students, their parents, school authorities, and the general public. These efforts also demonstrate an understanding that raising the school age must be supplemented by additional measures and supports.

Today, in addition to the 17 states and the District of Columbia that require students to remain in school until they graduate or are 18, 14 states have either introduced or passed legislation in the current session raising their compulsory school age to 18 (See Appendix C). Another 7 states have introduced legislation raising the age from 16 to 17. We are witnessing a moral seriousness about enriching school attendance requirements that is unprecedented perhaps since the movement to establish a compulsory school attendance age more than 100 years ago. Not all legislative efforts emerge victorious, but our hope is that state leaders will act upon their shared obligation to make sure that no student fails to graduate who otherwise could have succeeded.

Each state's legislative initiative moves according to its unique needs, interests, and history. Some of the states' bills under consideration merely raise the age to 18, while others provide additional provisions. Elements of more comprehensive legislative approaches include:

- An increase in the compulsory school age to 18
- Exceptions "with teeth," namely express permission from school authorities and parents to be exempted from the legal age requirement
- Alternative schooling options for students needing extra help
- Sanctions or penalties for failing to attend classes

Not everyone, of course, supports raising the compulsory school age. Some have argued that students inclined to drop out will do so anyway, regardless of what the legal age is. In addition, some say, forcing likely dropouts to stay in school will lead to greater classroom disruptions and an overall negative influence on the remaining students. Others have opposed raising the legal age because it interferes with parents' rights to make educational choices for their children, while still others argue that it raises the burden on taxpayers and gives more control to an already intrusive government.

While each of the arguments against raising the compulsory age merits consideration, many of the current state efforts can be regarded as efforts to respond to and accommodate them. There appears to be a growing consensus among governors and state officials that the long-term costs associated with the dropout problem warrant additional measures to help students stay in school and receive the support they need to graduate. Seen within the context of state economic development, earlier investments in young people are more likely to result in future economic benefit and lower social costs. Since there is a high probability that the government will be assuming responsibility for some aspect of a dropout's life through welfare, healthcare, and the criminal justice system, increased attention by the public school system in an early effort to help students graduate seems a preferable and preemptive intervention. And because there is evidence that an increase in the legal age increases graduation rates, it does not seem like sound policy to assume that all potential dropouts will in fact drop out. For these reasons, states such as Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, and New Hampshire – to name only a representative sample – are doing more than addressing the dropout problem by raising the legal age. Rather, they are providing supplemental supports, alternative education, and additional instruction to help students stay in school until they graduate.

As state leaders consider the best approach to boost graduation rates and cut dropout rates, they are also faced with the question of how effective their anti-truancy laws and programs are. For students who do slip through the cracks, it is imperative to have an effective system in place that helps reunite students with school and, ultimately, a path to graduation. There is evidence that anti-truancy programs work best when students receive strong personal attention from an adult, their parents are involved early, and schools provide intensive interventions. State laws can build upon what research tells us works.¹³ Some states define truancy too broadly and without enough clarity such that officials are not compelled to intervene early and effectively. There are good anti-truancy statutes, however, that recognize what students need to be reengaged in school. For example, Virginia's anti-truancy law requires an intervention

Our future and our way forward— is always education. Education is our obligation and our path to expanding opportunity for all... You can't encourage success if you make it easy to drop out of school. Let's raise the drop out age from 17 to 18 years old, increase graduation requirements, and fund schools based on the time students are in class."

— New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, State of the State Address January 16, 2007

"It's not the amount of money we pour into each child, but how we spend the money that counts. We'll look at successful education programs statewide and outside that can be replicated, and we'll look at new approaches! We've got to do something different. Our high school graduation rate is 61%. That's unacceptable!... We shouldn't have to import our workforce when it's growing up before us. And so a centerpiece of my administration IS our commitment to a "world class education" system."

— Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, State of the State Address, January 17, 2007

"I'd also like you to fix another absurd law by requiring all students to attend school until they are 18. A law enacted in 1895 says it's okay to drop out when you turn 16. Maybe it was okay then, but it is not okay now, and we all know it. We need to keep at-risk kids in school, but we also need to do more to help them succeed. This fall, we will open the first of a series of revolutionary new high schools. They will allow students to earn in five years both a high school diploma and a community college degree that will prepare them to fill job vacancies in our health care industry... Even with the best of schools, some of our children lack the kind of personal attention they need to get on track or to reach for a big goal like college. Mentor Michigan continues to help fill that void. Between September of 2004 and 2006, we increased the number of youth being mentored by nearly 12,000."

— Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm,
State of the State Address,
February 6, 2007]

after five unexcused absences in which parents are notified and the situation is discussed. If a sixth unexcused absence follows, a conference between parents, school officials, and additional community service providers is held to develop the appropriate ongoing intervention to help the student. One additional unexcused absence is grounds for referral to the courts.¹⁴ The Virginia statute is designed to promote an early school-based intervention that is both compassionate and compulsory that involves parents and provides necessary community supports outside of school to help keep the student engaged in school.

SPOTLIGHT — INDIANA & NEW HAMPSHIRE

INDIANA

In an effort to address lagging graduation rates, the State of Indiana passed legislation in 2005 and 2006 that raises the compulsory school age to 18 and allows limited exceptions only after a formal withdrawal process involving the parents and principal that explicitly makes clear to the student the likely consequences of dropping out.

The Indiana law recognizes that raising the age will keep some but not all potential dropouts in school. Because many students at risk of dropping out start exhibiting "dropout-like behavior" before they actually leave school, Indiana's law places early warning requirements on the state's high schools. Report cards must show suspensions, absences, whether work or drivers licenses have been revoked on account of unexcused absences, and whether the student is earning enough credits to move to the next grade level. Counseling for students who fall behind on their career plans is required by law so that credit recovery options are available soon enough to make a difference in a student's life.

In addition, Indiana law has provided for alternate education for 11th and 12th grade students who need a different learning environment to graduate. The alternate program allows students to enroll in a vocational education program or to seek employment, provided they maintain a 95 percent attendance rate in a school program requiring at least 3 hours of classes per day leading to a timely graduation with the appropriate credits.

Taken as a whole, the Indiana law addresses many of the key reasons students have cited for dropping out of high school that we highlighted in *The Silent Epidemic*. A copy of the Indiana legislation is provided in Appendix D.

Indiana State Representative Luke Messer

Luke Messer, a former state representative in Indiana, successfully sponsored the Indiana school age legislation. His innovative work has received national recognition and was featured in TIME magazine's cover story "Dropout Nation" and on the Oprah Winfrey Show.

Mr. Messer has said, "I sincerely believe that this is one of the most important civil rights issues of our generation. In a society that promises an inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, one can't meaningfully pursue happiness without an education that provides an opportunity at a living wage. For too long, we have sent too many young people into schools where they don't have a very good shot at success."

The following are excerpts from an interview with Mr. Messer.

How did you first get interested in the dropout issue?

A few years ago, Stan Jones, the Commissioner of the Indiana Higher Education Commission brought it to my attention that following the federal model and the model of nearly every state in the Union, Indiana computed high school completion rates in a way that did not track individual students and did not account for those who simply didn't show up for school the next year or other students who "disappeared" from the school system's enrollment. As a result, Indiana's more accurate statewide graduation rate was closer to 70%, not the 90+% that had been reported for years. Some urban schools had graduation rates below 30%.

What prompted you to introduce legislation?

First, I began to learn more about the devastating economic consequences of dropping out of school – both for an individual and society as a whole. Unfortunately, in our society it is remarkably hard to recover from the decision to drop out of school. Second, given those consequences, it simply does not seem just that we are sending our young people into schools where they have a 1/3rd chance of failure, and in many urban and remote rural schools the likelihood of failure is as high at 50% to 80%. That is just not good enough. We have to do better.

What were the greatest challenges to moving the bill?

Overcoming the myths surrounding this issue. The first myth was that we actually had a 90% graduation rate. The old way of

counting led to a result where almost every school in the state had a better than 85% graduation rate....

The second large myth was the "bad apple or bad egg" myth. Early on in this debate, I would have well meaning educators tell me, you just don't understand, if you keep these bad kids in class, you are just going to ruin school for the rest of the good kids. When you believe the true graduation rate is 90+%, you might believe that 10% of the kids are bad apples or bad eggs. However, when you begin to understand that true dropout rates are as high as 30, 50 to 80 percent in some schools, no one believes that 30, 50, 80 percent of kids are bad apples or bad eggs that can't make it. When folks see the real data, they begin to understand that something has to be done.

The third major myth was the "some kids move" myth. Again, well meaning educators would tell me that some of these kids just move. But, when you see the real data, you realize that no school has a 110% graduation rate graduating more seniors than they had as freshmen. The best schools in our state are in the 90+% graduation range. These kids are simply not moving to the suburbs, they are falling through the cracks of our system...

What do you think the impact of the legislation will be?

My biggest hope is that we started the process toward reform. Surely, there are better ideas out there for reform than the ones we came up with, but we did get started. And, I hope public policy leaders all across the country begin to address this crisis. We just cannot continue to allow a third to a half to in some places 80% of our young people be set up for failure.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Current research suggests that one in five students in New Hampshire drops out of high school. The New Hampshire legislature is currently considering a bill strongly backed by Governor John Lynch that aims to confront the problem. The bill raises the compulsory school age from 16 to 18 and provides alternative education for students at risk of dropping out.

Current New Hampshire law allows for standard exceptions to compulsory school attendance, such as physical or mental inability, and requires the agreement of parents and school authorities. The proposed legislation would allow a superintendent to waive attendance requirements in favor of an alternative learning plan for a student over the age of 16, so long as the plan is sufficiently rigorous and approved by the student's principal and parent or guardian. The law defines alternative learning plans broadly to include internships, technical education, community service, and online courses. The goal is to keep students engaged in learning so that they are sufficiently equipped to take the next steps in life after high school and participate fully in the economy.

A copy of the New Hampshire legislation is provided in Appendix E.

New Hampshire Governor John Lynch

John Lynch began a second term as New Hampshire's Governor in January 2007. Governor Lynch has made improving education and increasing the state's graduation rate a major priority of his second term and highlighted the issues in his recent inaugural address.

The following are excerpts from an interview with Governor Lynch.

How did you first get interested in the dropout issue?

Right now, 20 percent of our students are dropping out of high school. That is simply unacceptable.

What prompted you to feature this in your State of the State and to introduce legislation?

If our broad goal for education is opportunity, we should ensure we give our children the opportunity to get better jobs and live better lives. That opportunity begins with more New Hampshire young people graduating from high school. As a state we cannot continue to send a mixed message to New Hampshire's children that they will have the opportunities they deserve if they leave school at 16. As a state, we established a compulsory attendance age in 1903 because lawmakers realized students needed a certain level of education to get good jobs. But what made sense in 1903, doesn't make sense in 2007. In 1903, students could

leave school at 16 and get good jobs at mills or farms. That's just not true any longer. Half a high school education is no longer enough.

What are the greatest challenges to moving the bill?

Some believe that additional resources are needed to support alternative education programs for at-risk youth. In order to support and expand these types of programs in New Hampshire, I included an additional \$4 million in state funds. For example, my budget will double the dropout prevention program and, as a result, serve an additional 1,350 students. The funding increases the capacity of adult high schools to serve nearly 8,800 students at 53 locations; it allows the state apprenticeship program to serve 880 students across the State of New Hampshire; and will allow nearly 500 more students, for a total of 3,000, to attend the career and technical educational centers. In total, we will spend \$54 million in state and federal funds this biennium to help young people graduate from high school. And in the capital budget, I have included nearly \$14 million to begin renovations to two regional career and technical education centers in Exeter and Manchester. We are providing significant resources to help our young people stay in school.

What are the arguments that opponents summoned against it?

Aside from a claim of a lack of funding for alternative education programs, critics claim the legislation would cause the “warehousing” of students who do not want to be in school, which would lead to significant disruptions in the classroom. This bill does not force students to stay in classroom environments that are not working for them. Instead, it gives school districts and students the flexibility to create alternative learning plans, including vocational education, night school or internships that will engage students and make them want to complete their education. The funding for expanding these existing alternative programs has been included in my budget.

Expense has been cited as another concern. However letting these young people drop out of school has proven to be a great expense. Nationally, 80 percent of prison inmates are high school dropouts. Dropouts are twice as likely to be on welfare. Rates of teen pregnancy, substance abuse and crime are significantly higher among dropouts. A recent study by Polecon Research of Dover concluded that the cost to the state’s Medicaid program alone of high school dropouts, who have fewer opportunities to get jobs that offer health insurance, is nearly \$45 million a year. And students who drop out of high school will earn significantly less than their peers throughout their lives.

Also, a report by the Alliance for Excellent Education recently found if all households in New Hampshire were headed by high school graduates, the state would increase household wealth by more than \$216 million; New Hampshire could save more than \$13 million a year in remedial education costs at the state’s community technical colleges if high schools eliminate the need for remediation; New Hampshire could save almost \$64 million in health care costs over the respective lifetimes of each class of dropouts; if New Hampshire’s male high school graduation rate increases by 5 percent, it could lead to combined savings and revenue of more than \$15 million per year; and the lost lifetime earnings for each class of dropouts in New Hampshire are more than \$1 billion.

There is also the claim those wishing to leave school no longer have the desire or ability to learn. The majority of dropouts nationwide had grades of C or better when they left school and were confident they could have met graduation requirements. In fact, according to Civic Enterprises’ report commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, two-thirds of those surveyed said they would have stayed in school if more were demanded of them.

How does the public, and particularly students, in the state feel about this legislation? Any grassroots opposition to it?

I spend a lot of time in schools and I have spoken to many of these young people who either dropped out and are back in alternative programs, or were at-risk of dropping out. They all tell me the same thing - raising the compulsory attendance age to 18 and expanding alternative programs is the right thing to do. When I speak to these kids, they said if they had dropped out they would just be hanging around street corners. Now, most of them I talk to want to go on to college, and all of them said they will get their diploma.

Parents of home-schooled children have opposed the legislation, however the bill does not apply to their children.

What about parents, business leaders, others?

Many parents I have spoken with feel that this legislation sends a positive message to our students - that education is vitally important, and that we care enough about New Hampshire’s youth that we are not going to give up on them and we are going to require them to work toward a high school diploma. Talking to business leaders across New Hampshire, they tell me they have the products, they have the customers, but they need the skilled workers to allow their companies to grow. These jobs are not open to those without a high school diploma.

What do you think the impact of the legislation will be?

This legislation is about making it clear to New Hampshire young people that we are not going to give up on them or let them give up on themselves. It will further our goal of making sure every New Hampshire child receives a high school diploma. It will provide the skilled workers our companies need and help strengthen our economy.

CONCLUSION

The dropout epidemic in the United States requires the ongoing vigilance of our educators, policymakers, business and civic leaders, parents, students and the public. As states address the problem by raising the compulsory school attendance age, providing alternative learning opportunities, and making other reforms, we believe graduation rates will improve. Our hope is that the current momentum at the local, state and federal levels to do more to provide accurate information, improve accountability, raise expectations, and provide needed supports for students will go a long way toward addressing the silent epidemic of high school dropout.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND NOTE

The authors would like to give special thanks to Tiffany Happel and Lynn Klaiman of Civic Enterprises for the creative and cooperative effort that led to this report. Civic Enterprises is a public policy development firm dedicated to informing discussions on issues of importance to the nation. The authors also would like to thank Chaves Design for designing this report.

The views reflected in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Case Foundation or The MCJ Foundation.

ENDNOTES

¹U.S. Census Bureau (2003). *Mini-historical statistics: Education summary - enrollment*. Retrieved March 27, 2007, from Statistical Abstract of the United States, U.S. Census Bureau Web site: <http://www.census.gov/statab/hist/HS-20.pdf>

²U.S. Census Bureau (2003). *Mini-historical statistics: Population characteristics*. Retrieved March 27, 2007, from Statistical Abstract of the United States, U.S. Census Bureau Web site: <http://www.census.gov/statab/hist/HS-02.pdf>

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⁶Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor (January 2007). *Usual weekly earnings of wage and salary workers: Fourth quarter 2006*. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor Web site: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/wkyeng.pdf>

⁷Oreopolous, Philip (2005). *Stay in school: New lessons on the benefits of raising the legal school-leaving age*. Retrieved October 23, 2006 from C.D. Howe Institute Commentary Web site: http://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/commentary_223.pdf

⁸Levin, Henry, Clive Belfield, Peter Muenning, & Cecilia Rouse (2007). *The costs and benefits of an excellent education for all of America's children*. Retrieved March 17, 2007, from Columbia University Web site: http://www.cbcse.org/media/download_gallery/Leeds_Report_Final_Jan2007.pdf

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¹¹Levin, Belfied et. al., 1.

¹²It is worth noting that not all analysts agree that compulsory schooling laws are the main reason for the higher earnings that Angrist and Krueger describe. For example, John Bound and David Jaeger have argued that additional variables besides compulsory schooling laws also explain the earnings outcomes Angrist and Krueger attribute to compulsory schooling laws only. Bound and Jaeger's analysis, however, does not directly call into question Angrist and Krueger's finding that compulsory schooling laws play a significant role in preventing dropout from occurring. See Bound, John & David Jaeger (1996). On the validity of season of birth as an instrument in wage equations: A comment on Angrist & Krueger's "Does Compulsory School Attendance Affect Schooling and Earnings?" NBER Working Paper No. W5835. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=225621>

¹³See, for instance, "Effective truancy prevention and intervention." (2003). Wilder Research Center. St. Paul, Minnesota.

¹⁴Code of Virginia, 22.1-258. <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+22.1-258>

APPENDIX A

The Washington Post

The Dropout Challenge

By David S. Broder

Sunday, February 26, 2006; B07

They number in the millions — 3.5 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 25 who have dropped out of high school and were not enrolled in school in 2003, the most recent year for which an estimate is available. Of every three young men and women entering high school, only two will emerge with a diploma. For minority students, the odds are worse. And the losers pay a price all their lives.

They are the subject of “The Silent Epidemic,” a study that will be released Thursday. It was conducted for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation by a private research firm called Civic Enterprises. I was given a preview of the report by John Bridgeland, a former Bush administration domestic policy adviser who is one of its authors.

The dropout problem has been researched extensively. But this study is unusual in two respects. Peter Hart’s polling firm was commissioned to do focus groups and surveys of people between 16 and 25 who had quit school without diplomas. They were interviewed in 25 locations ranging from big cities and suburbs to small towns, all with unusually high dropout rates.

And these young people offered solid reasons to believe this is a solvable problem.

For one thing, they recognize that they made a mistake in quitting school. Eight out of 10 said they now know that having a diploma is important to success in life. And national data back them up. Dropouts earn an average \$9,200 a year less than high school graduates and have far greater likelihood of winding up on welfare, in prison or on drugs.

Three out of four of those interviewed said that, if they could do it over, they would choose to stay in school. Even more said they would re-enroll now to get their degrees, if they could do it with people their own age.

And most are confident they could make it. The big news out of the study — a surprise to many, I expect — is that most of these dropouts are not “hopeless losers.”

One-third of the 467 surveyed said they were failing in school. But more than six out of 10 were maintaining averages of C or better when they quit.

As many complained that classes were not challenging or interesting as found the academic requirements daunting. I believe it. A year ago, I visited — and wrote about — the Gateway to College program run by Portland (Ore.) Community College (and also funded by the Gates Foundation). There, I saw 14 teenage dropouts discussing the writings of Plato and Malcolm X — college-level work.

I quoted the leaders of the voluntary program, in which students accepted strict discipline barring absences or blown assignments, as believing it demonstrates that “even for the hardest cases — teenagers with few credits, low grade-point averages and a host of personal problems — the challenge of a tough curriculum, backed by skillful teaching in small classes and plenty of personal counseling, can be a path to success.”

That is also the essence of what the dropouts in this report suggest would rescue and reward them — and their millions of counterparts.

The authors of the study make a couple of other important points. They note that dropouts typically show many signs of disaffection before they quit school. One of the most common is frequent absences — skipping school entirely, cutting classes or leaving early in the afternoon. Better monitoring of attendance — and follow-ups with students and families when the pattern first appears — could do a lot to avert the ultimate act of dropping out.

And, the authors note, almost no one drops out of school before the 10th grade — or age 16. The fact that 16 is the last year of compulsory school attendance in most states is not irrelevant. Only one state — New Mexico — makes enrollment mandatory for most students until they obtain high school diplomas.

Raising the minimum age for school attendance, if accompanied by real support for the wavering students, would do a lot to end “the silent epidemic.”

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Appendix B – Compulsory School Attendance Laws by State

State	Age of Required School Attendance		Exemptions ^{1/} / Employed	
	from	to	Age	Completion of Grade
Alabama	7	16	legally and regularly employed under child labor law.	---
	3	21	for special education students.	---
Alaska	7	16	---	---
Arizona	6	16	14 with parental consent and gainfully employed.	---
Arkansas	5	17 must complete school year	---	---
California	6	18	---	---
Colorado	7	16	has current age and school certificate or work permit.	---
Connecticut	5	18	16 with parental consent.	---
Delaware	5	16	---	---
District of Columbia	5	18	---	---
Florida	6	17	may terminate attended at 16 with parental consent.	---
Georgia	6	16	---	---
Hawaii	6	18	15	---
Idaho	7	16	---	---
Illinois	7	17	employed and excused by school official.	---
Indiana	7	18	16 with consent of parent and principal 14 if a parent agrees and State Labor bureau issues a certificate. Must go back to school within 5 days of termination of employment for which certificate issued.	---
Iowa	6	16	---	---
Kansas	7	18	17 or 16 with parental consent	---
Kentucky	6	16	---	---

RAISING THE COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE: THE CASE FOR REFORM

State	Age of Required School Attendance		Exemptions ^{1/} Employed	
	from	to	Age	Completion of Grade
Louisiana	7	18 or 17 with parental consent	---	---
Maine	7	17	15 or	9
Maryland	5	16	---	---
Massachusetts	6	16	14	---
Michigan	6	16	---	---
Minnesota	7	16	---	---
Mississippi	6	17	5 years of age if in public kindergarten.	---
Missouri	7	16	14	---
Montana	7	16 or completion of 8th grade, whichever is later	---	---
Nebraska	7	18	14 and 16 with parental consent; special legislation for home schooling.	8 ---
Nevada	7	17	14 and excused by board of trustees. 14 if work is necessary for own or parents' support.	8 ---
New Hampshire	6	16	---	---
New Jersey	6	16	---	---
New Mexico	5, or 8 if parents and school board agree	high school graduate or 17 if excused by school board and employed in a gainful trade or occupation or child is in alternative schooling with parental consent.	---	---
New York	6	17 in cities with 4,500 or more population and union-free school districts, otherwise 16 if approved by local school board	---	---
North Carolina	7	16	---	---
North Dakota	7	16	necessary to support of family.	---
Ohio	6	18	16 with parents' and superintendents permission.	---

RAISING THE COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE: THE CASE FOR REFORM

State	Age of Required School Attendance		Exemptions / Employed	
	from	to	Age	Completion of Grade
Oklahoma	5	18 or 16 if excused by written joint agreement	---	---
Oregon	7	18 or excused by district school board; 16 with consent of school administration and parent; 21 for a child with a disability	16	---
Pennsylvania	8	17	16 if regularly engaged in employment with a certificate. 15 in farm work or domestic service in private home with permit. Or, 14 employed as above if completed elementary school with permit recommended by district superintendent of schools or principal of private school.	---
Rhode Island	6	18	16 with written parental consent.	---
South Carolina	5	17	16 further attendance is determined by court to be disruptive, unproductive or not in best interest of child.	8th grade completed and employment is necessary for maintenance of home
South Dakota	6	16 or completion of 8th grade if member of certain religious organizations	---	---
Tennessee	6	18th birthday	---	local exemptions at 17th birthday for discipline problems
Texas	6	18	---	---
Utah	6	18	16 and 8th grade completed. home schooled minors has exempt from attendance	8th for employment purposes
Vermont	6	16	15 and completed 6th grade and services needed for support of family.	---

RAISING THE COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE: THE CASE FOR REFORM

State	Age of Required School Attendance		Exemptions ^{1/} Employed	
	from	to	Age	Completion of Grade
Virginia	5	18	exempt any pupil with parent's consent along with that of principal or superintendent or a court which believes the minor cannot benefit from education at school.	---
Washington	8	18 or 16 and parent agrees that child should not be required to attend, or child is emancipated, or child has received certificate of competence.	16	---
West Virginia	6	16	---	---
Wisconsin	6	18	---	---
Wyoming	7	16	---	---

¹Nearly all States exempt those whose physical or mental condition precludes attendance. Other exemptions not directly related to employment include those because of distance from school or school transportation; expulsion, suspension or determined to be disruptive; marriage; excused by court or judge; and receiving religious education.

Prepared By:

Office of External Affairs
 Wage and Hour Division, Employment Standards Administration
 U.S. Department of Labor

This document was last revised in December 2006; unless otherwise stated, the information reflects requirements that were in effect, or would take effect, as of January 1, 2007.

Appendix C – Current Legislation

Alaska	"An Act raising the compulsory school attendance age; relating to the crime of contributing to the delinquency of a minor; relating to duties of the Department of Education and Early Development; relating to truancy; and relating to employment of a minor." (http://aksenate.org/index.php?bill=SB14)
Florida	"An act relating to mandatory school attendance; amending ss. 1002.20, 1003.21, and 1003.51, F.S.; changing the ending age for mandatory school attendance from 16 years to 18 years; providing an effective date." (http://www.flsenate.gov/data/session/2007/Senate/bills/billtext/pdf/s0360.pdf)
Iowa	"This bill raises the compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 18 years of age for students other than those receiving competent private instruction. The bill includes technical amendments to eliminate a reference to the compulsory attendance age for purposes of dual enrollment and to exempt children who meet conditions existing in Code section 299.2. The bill also directs the department of education to convene a compulsory attendance working group. The working group is to review supports for affected students and to consider the necessity of expanding support programs and services, online at-risk academy courses, career academies, current at-risk allowable growth provisions, and full funding of the instructional support levy. The working group must submit a report to the general assembly and the department of education by January 15, 2008. The bill may include a state mandate as defined in Code section 25B.3. The bill requires that the state cost of any state mandate included in the bill be paid by a school district from state school foundation aid received by the school district under Code section 257.16. The specification is deemed to constitute state compliance with any state mandate funding-related requirements of Code section 25B.2. The inclusion of this specification is intended to reinstate the requirement of political subdivisions to comply with any state mandates included in the bill. The provision relating to the working group takes effect July 1, 2007, while the remainder of the bill takes effect July 1, 2008." (http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=true&ga=82&hbill=HSB13)
Kentucky	"Amend KRS 159.010 to provide that, beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, and every year thereafter, compulsory school attendance shall be required for all children between the ages of six and eighteen who have not graduated from high school; make technical changes; amend KRS 159.020 to conform; amend KRS 159.051 to allow a student's driver's license to be revoked due to unexcused absences; amend KRS 186.560 to conform." (http://www.lrc.ky.gov/record/07rs/HB221.htm)
Massachusetts	"Section 1B of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2002 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "attendance" in line 102 its [sic] following: provided, however, all children under the age of 18 shall be required to attend school if they have not graduated." http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/house/185/ht00pdf/ht00394.pdf
Michigan	"Education; attendance; compulsory age for attendance; increase age to 18 and provide for certain alternative education options. Amends secs. 1561 & 1596 of 1976 PA 451 (MCL 380.1561 & 380.1596) & adds sec. 1591. Last Action: 1/10/2007 - REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION" (http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2007-sb-0011)
Nevada	"AN ACT relating to education; requiring the boards of trustees of school districts to prescribe a policy for the development of 4-year academic plans for pupils enrolled in high school; requiring the principals of certain larger high schools to provide for a program of a ninth grade school within a school; requiring the State Board of Education to prescribe a uniform grading scale for high schools; requiring each school district to adopt a policy setting forth the duties of school counselors; expanding the age for compulsory school attendance from 17 years to 18 years; and providing other matters properly relating thereto." (http://www.leg.state.nv.us/74th/Bills/AB/AB212.PDF#xml=http://search.leg.state.nv.us/isysquery/irl80cb/1/hilite)
New Hampshire	"This bill raises from 16 to 18 the age for compulsory school attendance and provides a procedure for a pupil who is at least 16 years of age to obtain an attendance waiver from school." (http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2007/SB0018.html)

New Jersey	"Every parent, guardian or other person having custody and control of a child between the ages of six and 18 years, if the child has not graduated from high school, shall cause such child regularly to attend the public schools of the district or a day school in which there is given instruction equivalent to that provided in the public schools for children of similar grades and attainments or to receive equivalent instruction elsewhere than at school." (http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2006/Bills/A2000/1801_11.HTM)
New Mexico	PASSED "A school-age person shall attend public school, private school, home school or a state institution until the school-age person is at least eighteen years of age unless that person has graduated from high school or received a general educational development certificate." (http://legis.state.nm.us/lcs/_session.asp?chamber=S&type=++&number=561&Submit=Search&year=07)
North Dakota	"Any person having responsibility for a child between the ages of seven and eighteen years shall ensure that the child is in attendance at a public school for the duration of each school year." (http://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/60-2007/bill-index/bi2184.html)
South Dakota	PASSED "Every person having control of a child, who is six years old by the first day of September and who has not exceeded the age of eighteen, shall cause the child to regularly and annually attend some public or nonpublic school for the entire term during which the public school in the district in which the person resides, or the school to which the child is assigned to attend, is in session, until the child reaches the age of eighteen years, unless the child has graduated or is excused as provided in this chapter." (http://legis.state.sd.us/sessions/2007/199.htm)
West Virginia	"A BILL to amend and reenact §18-8-1 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to changing the compulsory school attendance for children in the state from sixteen to eighteen years of age." (http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Text_HTML/2007_SESSIONS/RS/BILLS/hb2088%20intr.htm)
Wyoming	"AN ACT relating to compulsory school attendance; modifying requirements for compulsory attendance; imposing requirements on exemptions from required attendance; requiring school districts to report use of foundation funds directed at student drop-outs; and providing for an effective date." (http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2007/Introduced/HB0129.pdf)

APPENDIX D

INDIANA

Select Provisions from Indiana House Enrolled Act No. 1347, which was signed into law in March 2006

A complete copy of the act can be accessed at <http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2006/HE/HE1347.1.html>

SECTION 12. IC 20-33-2-9, AS ADDED BY P.L.1-2005, SECTION 17, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [JULY 1, 2006]: Sec. 9.

- (a) The governing body of each school corporation shall designate the appropriate employees of the school corporation to conduct the exit interviews for students described in section 6(a)(3) of this chapter. Each exit interview must be personally attended by:
 - (1) the student's parent;
 - (2) the student;
 - (3) each designated appropriate school employee; and
 - (4) the student's principal.
- (b) A student who is at least sixteen (16) years of age but less than eighteen (18) years of age is bound by the requirements of compulsory school attendance and may not withdraw from school before graduation unless:
 - (1) the student, the student's parent, and the principal agree to the withdrawal; and
 - (2) at the exit interview, the student provides written acknowledgment of the withdrawal that meets the requirements of subsection (c) and the:
 - (A) student's parent; and
 - (B) school principal;
 each provide written consent for the student to withdraw from school; and
 - (3) the withdrawal is due to:
 - (A) financial hardship and the individual must be employed to support the individual's family or a dependent;
 - (B) illness; or
 - (C) an order by a court that has jurisdiction over the student.
- (c) A written acknowledgment of withdrawal under subsection (b) must include a statement that the student and the student's parent understand that withdrawing from school is likely to:
 - (1) reduce the student's future earnings; and
 - (2) increase the student's likelihood of being unemployed in the future.

SECTION 13. IC 20-33-2-14, AS ADDED BY P.L.1-2005, SECTION 17, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2006]: Sec. 14.

- (a) This section and sections 15 through ~~17~~ 17.5 of this chapter apply to a student who attends either a public school or a nonpublic school.
- (b) Service as a page for or as an honoree of the general assembly is a lawful excuse for a student to be absent from school, when verified by a certificate of the secretary of the senate or the chief clerk of the house of representatives. A student excused from school attendance under this section may not be recorded as being absent on any date for which the excuse is operative and may not be penalized by the school in any manner.

SECTION 14. IC 20-33-2-17.5 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE AS A NEW SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2006]: Sec. 17.5. The governing body of a school corporation may authorize the absence and excuse of a student who attends any educationally related nonclassroom activity. Any educationally related nonclassroom activity and nonclassroom activity must meet all the following conditions:

- (1) Is consistent with and promotes the educational philosophy and goals of the school corporation and the state board.
- (2) Facilitates the attainment of specific educational objectives.
- (3) Is a part of the goals and objectives of an approved course or curriculum.
- (4) Represents a unique educational opportunity.
- (5) Cannot reasonably occur without interrupting the school day.
- (6) Is approved in writing by the school principal.

SECTION 15. IC 20-33-2-28.5, AS ADDED BY P.L.242-2005, SECTION 19, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2006]: Sec. 28.5.

- (a) This section applies to an individual:
 - (1) who:
 - (A) attends or last attended a public school;
 - (B) is at least sixteen (16) years of age but less than eighteen (18) years of age; and
 - (C) has not completed the requirements for graduation;
 - (2) who:
 - (A) wishes to withdraw from school before graduation;
 - (B) fails to return at the beginning of a semester; or
 - (C) stops attending school during a semester; and
 - (3) who has no record of transfer to another school.
- (b) An individual to whom this section applies may withdraw from school only if all of the following conditions are met:
 - (1) An exit interview is conducted.
 - (2) The individual's parent consents to the withdrawal.
 - (3) The school principal approves of the withdrawal.

(4) The withdrawal is due to:

- (A) financial hardship and the individual must be employed to support the individual's family or a dependent;
- (B) illness; or
- (C) an order by a court that has jurisdiction over the child.

During the exit interview, the school principal shall provide to the student and the student's parent a copy of statistics compiled by the department concerning the likely consequences of life without a high school diploma. The school principal shall advise the student and the student's parent that the student's withdrawal from school may prevent the student from receiving or result in the revocation of the student's employment certificate and driver's license or learner's permit.

(c) For purposes of this section, the following must be in written form:

- (1) An individual's request to withdraw from school.
- (2) A parent's consent to a withdrawal.
- (3) A principal's consent to a withdrawal.

(d) If the individual's principal does not consent to the individual's withdrawal under this section, the individual's parent may appeal the denial of consent to the governing body of the public school that the individual last attended.

(e) Each public school, including each school corporation and each charter school (as defined in IC 20-24-1-4), shall provide an annual report to the department setting forth the following information:

(1) The total number of individuals:

- (A) who withdrew from school under this section; and
- (B) who either:

(i) failed to return to school at the beginning of a semester; or

(ii) stopped attending school during a semester;

and for whom there is no record of transfer to another school.

(2) The number of individuals who withdrew from school following an exit interview.

(f) If an individual to which this section applies:

(1) has not received consent to withdraw from school under this section; and

(2) fails to return to school at the beginning of a semester or during the semester;

the principal of the school that the individual last attended shall deliver by certified mail or personal delivery to the bureau of child labor a record of the individual's failure to return to school so that the bureau of child labor revokes any employment certificates issued to the individual and does not issue any additional employment certificates to the individual. For purposes of IC 20-33-3-13, the individual shall be considered a dropout.

(g) At the same time that a school principal delivers the record under subsection (f), the principal shall deliver by certified mail or personal delivery to the bureau of motor vehicles a record of the individual's failure to return to school so that the bureau of motor vehicles revokes any driver's license or learner's permit issued to the individual

and does not issue any additional driver's licenses or learner's permits to the individual before the individual is at least eighteen (18) years of age. For purposes of IC 9-24-2-1, the individual shall be considered a dropout.

(h) If:

(1) a principal has delivered the record required under subsection (f) or (g), or both; and

(2) the school subsequently gives consent to the individual to withdraw from school under this section; the principal of the school shall send a notice of withdrawal to the bureau of child labor and the bureau of motor vehicles by certified mail or personal delivery and, for purposes of IC 20-33-3-13 and IC 9-24-2-1, the individual shall no longer be considered a dropout.

APPENDIX E

New Hampshire

SB 18-FN – AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

03/15/07 0486s

2007 SESSION

07-1184

04/10

SENATE BILL 18-FN

AN ACT raising the age of required attendance of children in school.

SPONSORS: Sen. Estabrook, Dist 21; Sen. Gottesman, Dist 12; Sen. Gallus, Dist 1; Sen. Odell, Dist 8; Sen. Foster, Dist 13; Sen. Kelly, Dist 10; Sen. Fuller Clark, Dist 24; Sen. Hassan, Dist 23; Sen. D’Allesandro, Dist 20; Sen. Larsen, Dist 15; Rep. Rous, Straf 7; Rep. Dunn, Ches 3; Rep. Remick, Coos 2

COMMITTEE: Education

ANALYSIS

This bill raises from 16 to 18 the age for compulsory school attendance and provides a procedure for a pupil who is at least 16 years of age to obtain an attendance waiver from school.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in *bold italics*.

Matter removed from current law appears ~~in brackets and struck through.~~

Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

03/15/07 0486s

07-1184

04/10

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Seven

AN ACT raising the age of required attendance of children in school.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 School Attendance; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil. Amend RSA 193:1, I to read as follows:

I. A parent of any child at least 6 years of age and under [16] 18 years of age shall cause such child to attend the public school to which the child is assigned in the child's resident district. Such child shall attend full time when such school is in session unless:

(a) The child is attending a public school outside the district to which the child is assigned or an approved private school for the same time;

(b) The child is receiving home education and is therefore exempt from this requirement; [or]

(c) The relevant school district superintendent has excused a child from attendance because the child is physically or mentally unable to attend school, or has been temporarily excused upon the request of the parent for purposes agreed upon by the school authorities and the parent. Such excused absences shall not be permitted if they cause a serious adverse effect upon the student's educational progress. Students excused for such temporary absences may be claimed as full-time pupils for purposes of calculating state aid under RSA 186-C:18 and equitable education grants under RSA 198:41;

(d) The pupil has been exempted from attendance pursuant to RSA 193:5;

(e) The pupil has successfully completed all requirements for graduation and the school district is prepared to issue a diploma or the pupil has successfully achieved the equivalent of a high school diploma by either:

(1) Obtaining a GED certificate; or

(2) Documenting the completion of a home school program at the high school level by submitting a certificate or letter to the department of education.

(f) The pupil has been accepted into an accredited postsecondary education program; or

(g) The pupil obtains a waiver from the superintendent, which shall only be granted upon proof that the pupil is 16 years of age or older and has an alternative learning plan for obtaining either a high school diploma or its equivalent.

(1) Alternative learning plans shall include age-appropriate academic rigor and the flexibility to incorporate the pupil's interests and manner of learning. These plans may include, but are not limited to, such components or combination of components of extended learning opportunities as independent study, private instruction, performing groups, internships, community service, apprenticeships, and on-line courses.

(2) Alternative learning plans shall be developed, and amended if necessary, in consultation with the pupil, a school guidance counselor, the school principal and at least one parent or guardian of the pupil, and submitted to the school district superintendent for approval.

(3) If the superintendent does not approve the alternative learning plan, the parent or guardian of the pupil may appeal such decision to the local school board. A parent or guardian may appeal the decision of the local school board to the state board of education consistent with the provisions of RSA 21-N:11, III.

2 School Attendance; Bylaws as to Nonattendance. Amend RSA 193:16 to read as follows:

193:16 Bylaws as to Nonattendance. Districts may make bylaws, not repugnant to law, concerning habitual truants and children between the ages of 6 and ~~[16]~~ 18 years not attending school ~~[and not having a regular and lawful occupation,]~~ *or who are not participating in an alternative learning plan under RSA 193:1, I(g)*, and to compel the attendance of such children at school; failure to comply with such bylaws shall constitute a violation for each offense.

3 Truant Officers; Duties. Amend RSA 189:36 to read as follows:

189:36 Duties. Truant officers shall, when directed by the school board, enforce the laws and regulations relating to truants and children between the ages of 8 and [16] 18 years not attending school ~~[and without any regular and lawful occupation]~~ *or who are not participating in an alternative learning plan under RSA 193:1, I(g)*; and the laws relating to the attendance at school of children between the ages of 8 and 18 years; and shall have authority without a warrant to take and place in school any children found employed contrary to the laws relating to the employment of children, or violating the laws relating to the compulsory attendance at school of children under the age of 18 years, and the laws relating to child labor. *No home school pupil nor any person between the ages of 6 and 18 who meets any of the requirements of RSA 193:1, I(c)-(g) shall be deemed a truant.*

4 Home Education; Definitions. Amend RSA 193-A:1, I to read as follows:

I. "Child" means a child or children at least 6 years of age and under [16] 18 years of age who is a resident of New Hampshire.

5 Repeal. RSA 193:1, IV, relative to withdrawal from school for children who are at least 16 years of age but under 18 years of age, is repealed.

6 Effective Date. This act shall take effect July 1, 2009.

LBAO

07-1184

01/23/07

SB 18-FN - FISCAL NOTE

AN ACT raising the age of required attendance of children in school.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Department of Education states this bill may increase local expenditures by an indeterminable amount in FY 2010 and each fiscal year thereafter. There will be no fiscal impact on state and county expenditures or state, county, and local revenue.

METHODOLOGY:

The Department indicated that raising the compulsory age of attendance to 18 years of age would increase the high school population by less than 1,100 students in FY 2010 and each fiscal year thereafter. Based on dropout data from the 2005-2006 school year, approximately 1,300 students who dropped out of school were under the age of

18; had these students stayed in school until age 18, average daily membership (ADM) would have been higher by approximately 1,200. The Department further indicated that based on anticipated declines in the dropout rate and student enrollment, increased ADM in FY 2010 will be approximately 1,100, and such an increase should not require additional facilities or teachers. The Department assumes students covered by catastrophic aid do not drop out of school before the age of 18. With an effective date of July 1, 2009, the first year in which enrollment will be impacted is FY 2010; enrollment from FY 2011 will be used to calculate FY 2014 equitable education aid. Only the limited English proficient and transportation portions of the targeted aid component will be impacted by an increased ADM. In FY 2005, 28 dropouts received three or more hours per week of limited English proficiency services, 20 of which were under the age of 18. It is assumed this number will remain constant. Total impact on targeted aid beginning in FY 2014 would be \$229,000 [(1,100 x \$190 transportation aid) + (20 limited English proficient x \$1,000)].

The Department states this bill may increase local school district expenditures in FY 2010 and each fiscal year thereafter to provide appropriate programs for potential dropouts between the ages of 16 and 18.

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Attachment B

**“Stay In School: new Lessons On the Benefits of Raising the Legal
School –Leaving Age,” December 2005, Philip Oreopoulos, C.D. Howe
Institute**



C.D. Howe Institute
Commentary

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The Education Papers

Stay in School:

*New Lessons on the Benefits
of Raising the Legal School-
Leaving Age*

Philip Oreopoulos

In this issue...

High-school dropout rates remain disturbingly high in Canada. But is raising the minimum age for leaving school part of the solution? New evidence suggests that it is.

The Study in Brief

Too many, too soon: that is the common lament over Canada's disturbing high-school dropout rate. With one in five young adults lacking a high-school diploma, politicians and educators are looking for solutions. This paper examines one possible answer: raising the minimum school-leaving age above 16.

The paper presents new evidence from the United States and New Brunswick, which raised the age to 18 in 2000, for considering whether the other provinces should support and enforce an increase in the school-leaving age. First, the study examines broad data on school enrolment and attainment in these jurisdictions. The finding: partly as a result of weak enforcement, recent changes in the school-leaving age had only a small — but still significant — impact on school completion rates.

The study then delves deeper with a more systematic analysis, which isolates those students specifically affected by changes to the school-leaving age. Based on the results, the study estimates that raising the school-leaving age above 16:

- increases, on average, an individual's length of schooling by between 0.12 and 0.16 years;
- decreases the dropout rate by between 1.2 and 2.1 percentage points; and
- increases the fraction of young adults with at least some college or university by between 1.5 and 2.1 percentage points.

Raising school attainment alone, however, does not indicate successful policy. More important are the effects of raising the school-leaving age above 16 on early unemployment and earnings outcomes for those forced to stay in school longer. The results show that an additional year of compulsory schooling not only lowers the probability of being unemployed but also boosts weekly earnings.

This is the first study to look at the impact of measures raising the school-leaving age over the last 20- to 30-year period in North America. Its findings are in line with those of previous studies, which have dealt with increases in the minimum age that occurred in the early half of the 20th century.

The Author of This Issue

Philip Oreopoulos is Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Toronto and Faculty Research Fellow with the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

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The high-school dropout rate in Canada remains uncomfortably high. About 20 percent of Canadians in their twenties — one in five — have no secondary-school certificate and no postsecondary education of any kind.¹ The figure is disturbing because high-school dropouts fare much worse later in life compared to those who obtain more education. They earn, on average, less than high-school graduates and are more likely to be unemployed, draw on social assistance and other welfare programs, end up in jail and be in poorer health. If dropping out causes these bad outcomes, students that drift towards early exit in school stand much to gain from staying on instead.

Provincial education ministries have grappled with finding ways to reduce the number of dropouts. Some suggest lowering class size, others suggest making the curriculum easier, or trying to target at-risk students earlier. An additional possibility, also considered recently by several provinces, is to raise the minimum school-leaving age. This specifies the length of time students must spend in school before having the legal option to leave. Except for New Brunswick, all provinces mandate a minimum school-leaving age of 16. In Alberta, a private member's bill proposing to raise the age to 17 was legislated in 2003, but was never proclaimed (Red Deer Public Schools 2005). The Ontario government said in 2002 it planned to raise the age to 18. It reiterated that commitment in the fall 2005 Throne Speech and a policy announcement is expected very soon.

Support for increasing the school-leaving age often rests on paternalistic hunches that students wishing to leave school early are, in fact, better off if they decide to stay on. In 1998, for example, the Deputy Minister of Education for New Brunswick provided this explanation for the province's decision to raise the minimum school-leaving age to 18:

"[E]ducators must help students fulfill the Mission of Public Education in New Brunswick to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and attributes needed to be a life-long learner, to achieve personal fulfillment and to contribute to a productive just and democratic society." (School-leaving Age Task Force 1998.)

And in Ontario, Premier Dalton McGuinty stated:

"We've got a law on the books now that says that you can quit school when you're 16. Think about it. This is the knowledge economy — that no longer makes sense. So we're going to require that young people be in school or learning outside of school ... until they reach the age of 18." (National Post, September 28, 2002.)

1 Twenty-seven percent of 22- to 24-year-olds in the 2001 Canadian Census had no secondary school certificate, down slightly from 29 percent in 1996 and 30 percent in 1991. Only 19 percent of these individuals take additional postsecondary schooling. There are several other ways to gauge high-school completion (see Kaufman, Alt and Chapman 2001). For example, event dropout rates indicate the percentage of students who dropped out of school over a relatively short period of time, often between one year and the next. The less time-sensitive status dropout rate measures the percentage of individuals who are not enrolled in high school and who lack a high-school credential. Completion rates measure the percentage of a given population that has a high-school credential, regardless of when the credential was earned. Measures of completion vary depending on what age groups are included, since some individuals return later to complete a degree. Data on completion rates from the census and labour force survey seem most reliable to me, but most other measures produce similar trends and measures. Mainly for exposition, I shall refer to students who do not complete their secondary degree as dropouts. These figures are similar, whether looking at all 22- to 24-year-olds, or only Canadian-born.

But hunches aside, what do the lessons of experience have to say? The purpose of this paper is to present new evidence from New Brunswick and the United States for considering whether the provinces should support and enforce an increase in the legal school-leaving age.

The first part of the paper focuses on whether recent changes in laws to increase the minimum age in Canada and the U.S. had any impact on increasing school enrolment and attainment. Many of the revised laws included exceptions, were poorly enforced, or had little punishment for non-compliance. Partly as a result of weak enforcement, I find that recent increases in the school-leaving age had only a small — but still significant — impact on school completion rates.

Then I apply a more systematic analysis, with findings that lend further support to increasing the school-leaving age. Most interestingly, even though compulsory schooling laws do not mandate any postsecondary education, I find that raising the school-leaving age above 16 increases the fraction of youths with at least some college or university. One notion consistent with this finding is that some individuals compelled to stay longer in high school become more interested in postsecondary education, or view higher education as less daunting than when they were younger. The paper finally considers the employment benefits for students who extend their schooling under compulsion. I estimate the subsequent impact on earnings and employment for the small fraction of students specifically affected by increases in the school-leaving age and who stay in school longer as a result.

A word on methodology: My methodology (see Appendix B) takes into account changes in compulsory school laws in different states at different times. It allows us to estimate not only the overall impact of compulsory school-leaving laws, but also their impact on students specifically affected by them and who would have otherwise left school.

Without this methodology, it is hard to distinguish between the effect of staying in school beyond 16 and the effect of the underlying factors, such as motivation, that lead some teenagers to remain in school longer than others. For example, if we observe that someone who finished high school earns more than someone who didn't, is it because the individual stayed in school longer or is it because the individual is generally more motivated, which led him/her to stay in school longer, and work harder to earn more? If we don't take care to distinguish between the two possibilities, we might assign to extra schooling an advantage that really comes from individual characteristics that are independent of school policies.

The results of my analysis are very similar to older studies. I estimate that individuals compelled to stay in school beyond 16 experience significantly higher earnings and higher opportunities for employment in their early careers. Finding large labour-market gains for individuals forced to stay in school raises the question of why dropouts drop out in the first place. Why do young persons in Canada leave school early if staying on generates attractive gains, on average, to their careers and overall well-being? For dropouts to know what they are doing, they must really hate school to forgo the large expected returns from staying on. Alternatively, perhaps the reasons behind wanting to introduce compulsory schooling laws in the first place are correct: perhaps dropouts are myopic, or

underestimate the gains from school, or perhaps social pressures dominate their concerns. Whatever the reasons, one clear recommendation of this paper is that if provinces are serious about raising the school-leaving age, they need to effectively enforce these laws and promote their potential benefits to administrators, parents, and students.

Previous Studies

Previous studies have dealt with increases in the minimum school-leaving age that occurred in the early half of the 20th century. They have consistently found large gains to adult social-economic outcomes. For the United States, Angrist and Krueger (1991) and Acemoglu and Angrist (2001) estimated (using very different methodologies) that annual adult earnings are about 10 percent higher for students compelled to stay a year longer in school. For the United Kingdom, Harmon and Walker (1995) found about 14 percent higher earnings from such compulsory measures. And for Canada, I found similar gains, using provincial law changes between 1915 and 1970, for would-be-dropouts compelled to stay in school.

Other studies have examined the impact of compulsory schooling on non-pecuniary outcomes. Lochner and Moretti (2004) estimated that compulsory schooling lowers the likelihood of committing crime or ending up in jail. Lleras-Muney (2005) estimated an additional year of compulsory schooling substantially lowers the probability of dying sooner among elderly people. Black, Devereux, and Salvanes (2005) found compulsory schooling reduces the chances of teen pregnancy in the United States and Norway. And Oreopoulos, Page and Stevens (2003) conclude that parents with more compulsory schooling are also less likely to have children who have to repeat a grade or drop out themselves.

However, these earlier reports examine effects from raising the minimum school-leaving age to 14, 15, or 16 many decades ago, often before the 1950s. The circumstances behind dropout decisions back then were quite different than the circumstances behind dropout decisions today. The demand for skilled workers has increased, and the gains from additional education attainment may also have increased. On the other hand, more students today graduate from high school and obtain postsecondary education. Today's dropouts come from relatively poorer families. Based on the 2001 Census, 73 percent of dropouts under 20 and living at home have parents with household income below the 25th percentile, compared to 61 percent of dropouts from the 1981 census. It is not clear whether compelling these individuals to remain in school beyond 16 would generate the same effects found in earlier studies.

Ideally, we need to explore more recent changes. New Brunswick's change in the school-leaving age, from 16 to 18 in 2000, is almost too recent, since not enough time has elapsed to examine subsequent outcomes. Consequently, I look to the United States. Like provinces in Canada, many states in the U.S. have discussed raising the school-leaving age to 17 or 18, almost making high-school graduation compulsory. As of today, 29 states have already increased the minimum age above 16. Below, I use these recent changes to examine the potential for compulsory schooling to: 1. serve as an effective policy for reducing dropout

rates; and 2. improve subsequent social-economic outcomes. While using the same methodology as the earlier studies, this is the first study to look at measures over the last 20- to 30-year period that raised the minimum school-leaving age above 16.

Recent Changes to Compulsory Schooling Laws in the U.S. and Canada

As a first step, this section provides an overview of compulsory schooling laws in U.S. states, then in New Brunswick. It considers the extent to which the laws are enforced, and their impact, based on broad data on high-school enrolment and educational attainment for the relevant age groups.

The U.S. Experience

Many states in the U.S. have a minimum school-leaving age of 17 or 18. The National Center for Education Statistics' annual Education Digest lists these laws. Figure 1A shows the minimum school-leaving age between 1970 and 2003 for states that set the age above 16 at least once during this period (and for the District of Columbia). Figure 1B shows the other states.² Several, like Rhode Island, Florida, and Nebraska, upgraded their compulsory school laws only in the last few years. Others, like Oklahoma, Oregon, and Utah, however, have had a minimum-leaving age set above 16 for more than two decades.

The strange pattern shown by a few states, where the leaving age has been raised, then lowered, hints that more is going on. A closer look at the legislation reveals that there is much more to compulsory school laws than a specific age range within which individuals must remain in school. In several states, students can leave earlier than the legal minimum age if they work instead. In other cases, students can leave with parental consent. Kansas allows dropping out before the recorded minimum age if, after a counselling session, both student and parents sign a disclaimer. In doing so, they acknowledge a list of academic skills the student may not yet have acquired, and statistics on differences in average earnings and unemployment rates between dropouts and graduates.³

Some students disengage and drop out illegally because compulsory schooling policies are not well-enforced, or punishment for habitual truancy is not severe enough to deter them. Administrators may be reluctant to pursue court action, especially in cases where students are disruptive in class and do not appear interested in school. In virtually every state, the primary action when a student begins to disengage from school (through absenteeism) is to notify a parent or guardian and counsel him or her to encourage the child to attend. Some states require parents to pay fines or even face imprisonment for a child that regularly skips school. Children themselves can face termination of driving privileges (see Burke 2005), community service, or be forced to attend a juvenile detention facility.

2 Hawaii and Alaska are left out of this paper's analysis because student dropout trends in these states are less likely to follow trends in the rest of the country.

3 See Kansas State Department of Education (2005).

Figure 1A: States with Minimum School-Leaving Age Greater than 16 At Least Once, 1970 – 2003

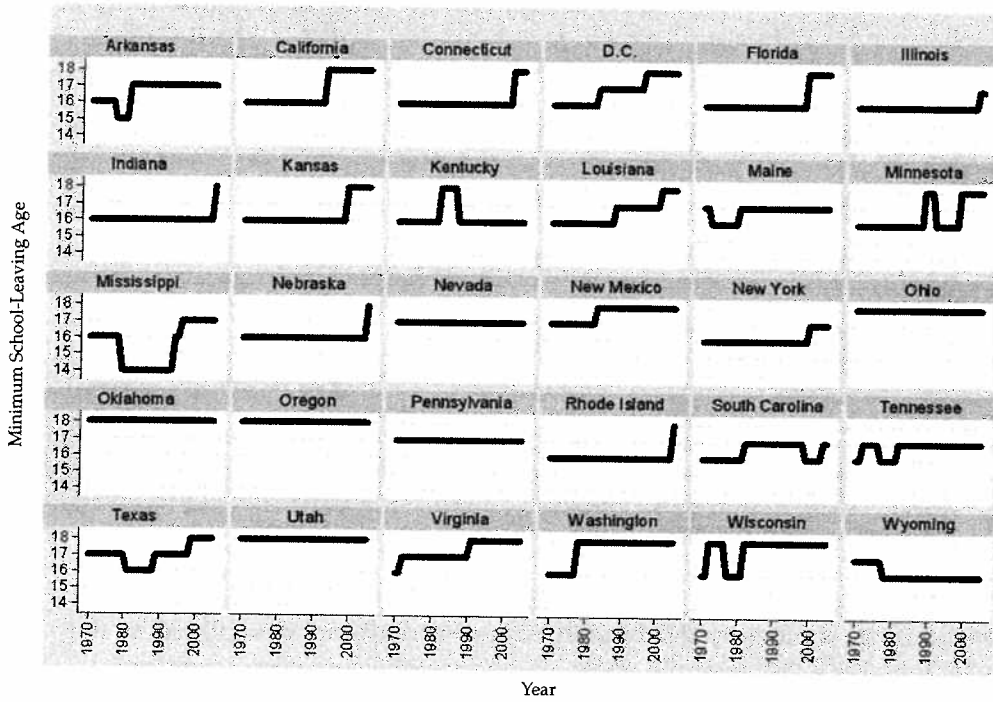


Figure 1B: States with Minimum School-Leaving Age 16 or Less, 1970 – 2003

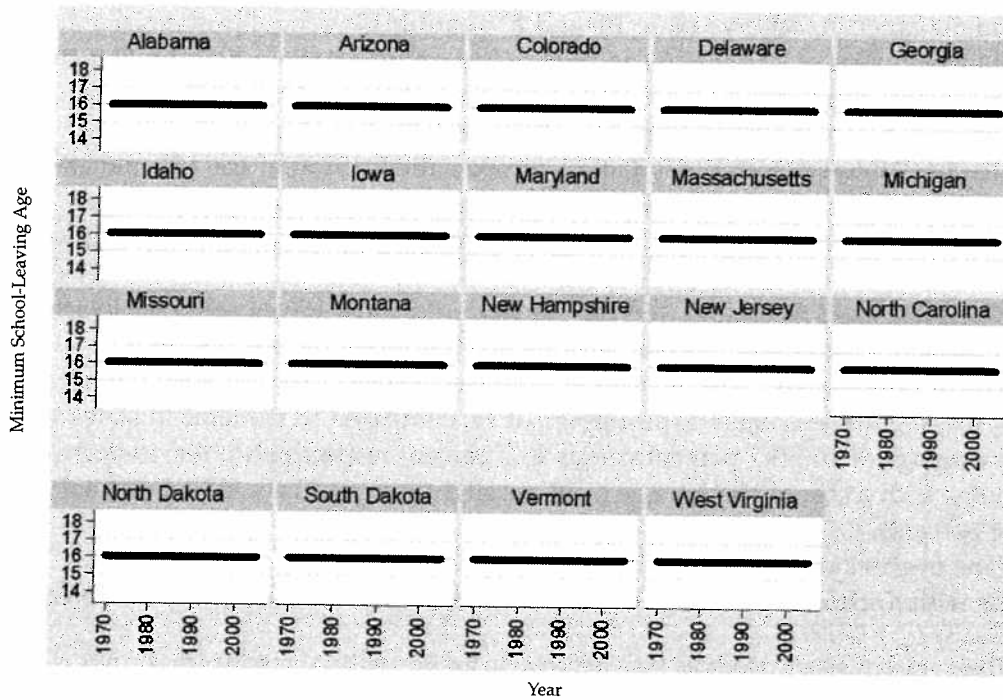


Table 1: *School Attainment by School-Leaving Age Faced at Age 16, 2000 – 2003*

	Legal School-Leaving Age Faced at Age 16		
	16	17	18
		%	
Fraction of 16-Year-Olds In School During School Year	96.20	95.65	96.63
Fraction of 17-Year-Olds In School During School Year	91.68	91.66	93.22
Fraction of 18-Year-Olds In School During School Year	73.42	73.64	74.73
Fraction of 20- to 24-Year-Olds with High School Degree or some Postsecondary	85.56	83.38	85.24
Fraction of 20- to 24-Year-Olds with some Postsecondary	51.55	48.55	52.14

Notes: Data are from the NBER's extracts of the Merged Outgoing Rotation Files of the Current Population Survey. The years included for this table are 2000 to 2003. The "in school" variable is coded as one if an individual is enrolled part-time or full-time in school the week of the survey.

In practice, only a fraction of habitually truant students are disciplined by the state. In Tennessee, for example, most attendance officers believe that their caseload is too large and that they face difficulty contacting the families of truant students (Palmisano and Potts 2004). Only general guidelines are provided by the state to determine habitual truancy, and schools have little financial incentive to improve attendance.

If the minimum school-leaving age affects at least some would-be dropouts, we might expect to observe more 16- and 17-year-olds in school in states that have legal leaving ages of 17 or 18, respectively, compared to states with a leaving age of 16. We also might expect that in states that provide no exceptions to a leaving age of 18, we should observe virtually all 16- and 17-year-olds in school.

To check these expectations, Table 1 presents the fraction of 16-, 17-, and 18-year-olds in school during the 2000 to 2003 school years. Results for each age group are categorized under the minimum-leaving age faced at age 16,⁴ whether that be 16, 17 or 18.

Consider, first, the case of 16-year-old students. Most 16-year-olds are in school regardless of the minimum school-leaving age that exists, which might be expected. But contrary to expectations, students in states with a school-leaving age of 17 are slightly less likely to be enrolled at 16, compared to students in states with a leaving age of 16 (95.7 percent versus 96.2 percent respectively). Yet, 16-year-olds in states with a school-leaving age of 18 are slightly more likely to be in school (96.6 percent).

The fraction of 17-year-olds in school by no means spikes up for youths in states with a school-leaving age of 18, as we might expect to see. Fully 6.8 percent

⁴ These proportions are calculated from responses in the 2000 to 2003 outgoing rotation files of the Current Population Survey, excluding the months of June, July and August and using population weights. I matched the state school leaving ages to the year in which an individual was 16 in their current state of residence. The data appendix provides additional details.

of 17-year-olds in states with a leaving age of 18 have left, which is comparable to 8.3 percent in states with a leaving age of 16.

Table 1 also presents education attainment measures for 20- to 24-year-olds. There are surprisingly no major differences in the dropout rate or postsecondary attainment rate across states with different leaving ages. One reason for this is that states that tend to have more restrictive compulsory schooling laws also perennially tend to have more students that drop out, regardless of legal stipulations. This limits our ability to observe the effects of these age limits. I address this in the next section. At the very least, the finding that many students leave before the legally mandated age suggests that exceptions, exemptions, and lack of enforcement of these laws weaken their effectiveness in keeping youths in school.

The New Brunswick Experience

The province of New Brunswick increased the school-leaving age to 18 in 2000. This was the first (and, so far, only) time any province raised the school-leaving age above 16. A task force in 1999 recommended the change, provided that programs were set up to address needs for students who would struggle to cope staying longer.⁵ New services, including apprenticeships and tutoring programs, were introduced along with the new law.

The school-leaving age of 18, however, is not enforced. The Education Act of New Brunswick (2005) indicates that a parent who fails to 'cause' a frequently truant child to go back to school is subject to a misdemeanour charge, but only until that child is 16. There is no consequence listed in the Act associated with habitual truancy of children 16 years old or older.⁶

To examine whether the new law affected school enrolment, Figures 2A, 2B, and 2C plot the portion of teenagers in school full-time in New Brunswick and in the other Maritime Provinces (which have minimum school-leaving ages of 16) between 1995 and 2004. These data come from the monthly Labour Force Surveys.⁷ Under the law change, we might expect to observe a jump in school enrolment among late teens in New Brunswick after 2000, but no such jump for late teens in the other provinces (Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland). As with the U.S. comparison above, however, there is little difference between enrolment rates across the Maritimes. The fraction of 16-year-

5 See School Leaving Age Task Force (1998).

6 An article by Davis (2004) in the *New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal* notes: "A five-year-old law designed to keep New Brunswick teens in school until age 18 has never been enforced." She cites Robert Gerard, director of student services with the Department of Education as saying the law wasn't put in place to prosecute offenders or their parents. "It was part of a proactive approach the department took to ensure the needs of all students are met. Psychologically, it has made a difference for educators, parents and students. The mindset had to be changed of educators to recognize that the Department of Education and society was serious about the need to keep our children in school and make sure they have a sound education."

7 I use Statistics Canada's more detailed version that includes an individual's age, rather than age in the Public Use files. I combined the monthly surveys between 1995 and 2004, excluding the months between June and August. I use population weights to calculate the fraction of full-time students at different ages.