

Thomas Obermeyer

From: Sunny Deye [sunny.deye@ncsl.org]
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 11:57 AM
To: Thomas Obermeyer
Subject: (ding, final answer) - grad rates for 6 states that recently raised compulsory school age
Attachments: gradnation.pdf

Tom, I think the most reliable research – to your question – was conducted recently by the Grad Nation researchers (report attached) –

p. 46:

Of the 6 states that increased the compulsory school age between 2002 and 2008, two states (Illinois and South Dakota) experienced increases in their graduation rates. Only Nevada experienced a decline.

6 states: Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, and South Dakota

(Michigan increased in 2009 - not included here)

Perhaps bringing copies of that report to the committee will satisfactorily answer the question. These are very well respected researchers.

What else can I do to help?

Sunny

From: Sunny Deye [mailto:sunny.deye@ncsl.org]
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 11:41 AM
To: 'Thomas Obermeyer'
Subject: research - compulsory school age

Tom,

Attached are the two reports referred to in the NCSL Dropout task force report. Especially, see p. 46 of the Building a Grad Nation report:

Increasing Compulsory School Age Requirements

In our previous research, students identified "too much freedom" as a key factor that enabled them to drop out of high school, and poor attendance is a strong predictor of dropping out.³⁶ Most states originally enacted compulsory school attendance laws between 1870 and 1910, a time when fewer than 10 percent of 17-year-olds graduated from high school, due in large part to the fact that a high school education was not a prerequisite to participating in the mainstream workforce.³⁷ Over the last year, extensive research has been conducted at the state level that highlights the growing gap between the areas where states are experiencing job growth and the educational levels of their populations.³⁸ Students required to attend high school for an additional year experience a 12 percent increase in earnings. These students are also less likely to report being unemployed, having health problems, being depressed, and working in lower-skilled jobs. They are also more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with their lives overall.³⁹ Many states have responded to these issues by raising the compulsory school age to send the message to students that graduating from high school is absolutely essential.

Since 2002, 12 states have raised the compulsory school age from 16 to 17 or 18.⁴⁰ Currently, 21 states have a compulsory school age of 18 and 32 states have a compulsory school age of 17 or 18.⁴¹ In some states that have a compulsory school attendance age of 17, like Tennessee and West Virginia,

students must remain in school until they are 18 to keep their driver's license.

A 1991 MIT and Harvard study shows that raising the compulsory school age acts as a constraint on dropping out.⁴²

Of the 6 states that increased the compulsory school age between 2002 and 2008, two states (Illinois and South Dakota) experienced increases in their graduation rates. Only Nevada experienced a decline.

Despite broad movement on raising the compulsory school age, this movement has not been uniformly embraced within the states. Over the last year alone, 13 states have introduced legislation to raise their compulsory school age to 17 or 18 that has stalled or died in committee.⁴³ Among the states that were unsuccessful in raising the compulsory school age, opposition from home school educators, parents, students, local businesses, and advocacy groups; an inability to determine if an increase in graduation and attendance rates or decrease in dropout rates can be attributed to increasing the compulsory school age; and the fiscal estimate were cited as critical barriers.⁴⁴ In some states where officials cited raising the compulsory school age law as a key tool to set clear expectations at the state level and to drive anti-truancy efforts locally, they also indicated that they feared in some cases parents were home schooling their children to get around the compulsory school age and to enable them to enter the workforce full time at an earlier age.

36 Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J.J., & K. B. Morison (2006). *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*. Civic Enterprises and Peter D. Hart Research Associates. For the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

37 U.S. Bureau of the Census (2002). *Mini-historical statistics: Education summary — enrollment*. Accessed at: www.census.gov/statab/hist/HS-20.pdf.

38 Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (2009). *Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

39 Oreopoulos, P. (2003) Do Dropouts Dropout Too Soon? *International Evidence From Changes in School-Leaving Laws*. National Bureau of Education Research Working Paper No. 10155.

40 One state, Minnesota, has lowered its compulsory school age from 18 to 16. Data compiled by the Education Commission of the States.

41 Ibid.

42 Angrist, J.D. & A.B. Krueger (1991). Does Compulsory School Attendance Affect Schooling and Earnings? *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 106(4): 979-1014.

43 Home School Legal Defense Association statistics.

44 See: Maryland State Department of Education (2007). *Attending to Learn: The Implications of Raising the Compulsory Age for School Attendance*. Final report of the Task Force to Study Raising the Compulsory Public School Attendance Age to 18. Submitted to the Maryland General Assembly and Governor.

Also attached is a Spring 2009 pub I just discovered – it analyzes state data on grad rates /dropout rates for states that have set the compulsory school age to 18. It's a really useful overview of the issue – but it concludes that there's not enough evidence to focus on age 18 as a policy over other dropout prevention efforts.

But – interestingly, it does not compare grad rates from when the policy took effect through now. Also, the data they refer to is 2004-05 NCES data.

Also attached is the final report of the Maryland task on compulsory school age of 18. It recommends raising the age and has lots of useful arguments and data.

I am trying to compile information about grad rates in the 20 states that have set their age to 18; but it's a big job and I'm not sure I can complete it in time for you – the thing is, I need to figure out when each state's compulsory ed age took effect; then look at grad rates from that year to 2006-07 (latest year data is available from NCES) – and I don't know if I can do that all by tomorrow – I'll try!

Sunny