

SB

9

<TARGET><BILL>SB 9</BILL><SUBJECT>SB
9</SUBJECT><COMM>SJUD27</COMM></TARGET>

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

Department of Education & Early Development

Office of the Commissioner

Goldbelt Place
801 West 10th Street, Suite 200
P. O. Box 110500
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500
(907) 465-2800
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March 22, 2011

The Honorable Hollis French
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
Alaska State Senate
Alaska State Capitol, Room 417
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair French:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide in writing responses to questions that the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) was unable to answer during testimony at the Senate Judiciary Committee's meeting on March 11, 2011. The committee hearing was related to Senate Bill 9 – Compulsory School Attendance Age.

Outlined below are the questions along with the responses provided for the committee. Although the bill has moved from the Senate Judiciary Committee, Ms. Smith from your office requested EED's responses so that they may be passed along to the next committee of referral as well as for the committee's consideration in case of a vote on the Senate Floor.

Questions & Responses:

1. Sen. Coghill asked about the disposition of a truancy case in the Northwest Arctic School District. EED is still waiting for information from the District Attorney's office in the Northwest Arctic region. EED will forward the response to the committee once it is received in our office.
2. Sens. Wielechowski, Paskvan, French & Coghill – Where does Commissioner Hanley stand on this legislation? The administration, including the Commissioner of Education & Early Development, has not taken a position on this legislation. The administration respects the legislative process and the deliberation of statewide policy, and does not take positions on each piece of legislation that comes before the legislature.
3. Sen. Coghill - How many students under 16 drop out currently? See a one-year table below.

Dropout Counts for age 16 or less

(from dropout rate calculation)

Grade	2009-2010 Dropouts
7	83
8	81
9	324
10	384
11	283
12	6

4. Sen. French – Can the physical plant support an additional 1400+ students? When examining the number of students who drop out of school at the district level the overall numbers do not appear to be so great that it would negatively impact school buildings in a manner causing capacity problems.
5. Sen. French – It would be interesting to know whether attendance rates increase with the passage of laws like SB9.

While we are unable to predict if attendance rates in Alaska would be impacted with the passage of SB9, there is research from other states regarding compulsory education laws and graduation rates.

The committee was provided information from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) by the bill's sponsor. According to the web site of six states that increased the compulsory school age between 2002 and 2008, two states (Illinois and South Dakota) experienced increases in their graduation rate. Only Nevada experienced a decline.

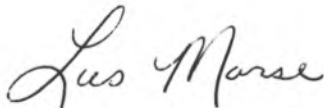
Another study referenced on the NCSL web site looked at state graduation states in those states that raised the compulsory attendance age to 17 or 18. This study, conducted by the Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy, found mixed results. The study found that eight states that had enacted an age 18 minimum dropout age by 2001 improved their graduation rates between 2001 and 2007. In fact, three states, Ohio, Oklahoma and Kansas, had improvements that were scarcely more than the national average improvement. Seven states actually saw a decline in their graduation rates while the rest of the nation was improving. Overall, only five of the 15 states had rates of improvement notably above the overall national average improvement from 2001-2007.

According to the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, in a report titled Raise the Age, Lower the Dropout Rate?, of ten states with the highest graduation rates only three states require attendance to the age of 18. Further, this study indicates that of the fourteen states with the lowest dropout rates only five require attendance to the age of 18.

The department examined information available from both the Education Commission of the States (ECS) on compulsory education laws in states, and from the National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES) on graduation rates. We found that of the states that have the highest graduation rates, those at 80% or higher, two had a compulsory age on the upper end of 18, two at 17 and eight at 16. For those states with the lowest graduation rates, 70% or less, four had a compulsory age on the upper end of 18, three at 17, and four at 16.

Thank you for the opportunity to follow up with these responses in writing. If you have any related questions or would like additional information, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Marcy Herman, at marcy.herman@alaska.gov or at 465-2803.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Les Morse".

Les Morse
Deputy Commissioner

Alaska State Legislature



Interim: (May - Dec.)
716 W. 4th Ave
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Phone: (907) 269-0144
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Senator Bettve Davis@legis.state.ak.us
<http://www.akdemocrats.org>

Office of Senator Bettve Davis

February 21, 2011
Senator French, Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee

RE: Request for Hearing for SB 9, 27-LS0085\M - "An Act relating to compulsory school attendance; and relating to the crime of contributing to the delinquency of a minor."

Dear Senator French,

Senator Davis respectfully requests a hearing on SB 9 before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Included in this hearing package are:

- 1. Sponsor Statement
- 2. Current version of SB 9, 27-LS0085\M.
- 3. Sectional Summary
- 4. Fiscal Note
- 5. Additional Documents
 - • DEED -"Graduation Rates in Alaska and Dropout Information" - 11/09/2010
 - • NEA Alaska Letter of Support
 - • NEA's 12 Point Plan to Reduce Dropout Rate 2009
 - • NCSL Email comments 2/15/2011 with references:
 - ▪ Attending to Learn the Implications of Raising the Compulsory School Age to 18 (Maryland, 2007)
 - ▪ Building a Grad Nation- Civic Enterprises at Johns Hopkins University
 - ▪ A Path to Graduation for Every Child-NCSL Task Force on Dropouts
 - • NCSL -"Compulsory Education" 2009
 - • ECS -"Compulsory School age Requirements" June, 2010
 - • US Dept Labor -"Employment Provisions-Compulsory School Attendance" Jan.2009
 - • National High School Center- "High School Dropout: Stats" - 2007
 - • *Boston Globe* 10/212/09 "Law urged to make teens stay in school."

Please plan on in-person and teleconference testimony. Please call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas S. Obermeyer".

Thomas S. Obermeyer
Legislative Assistant, 465-3762

Alaska State Legislature

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Senator Bettve Davis

SB 9 27-LS0085 “An Act relating to compulsory school attendance; and relating to the crime of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.”

SPONSOR STATEMENT

This bill changes the Alaska compulsory school attendance ages from 7-16 to 6-18. At the same time it necessarily amends the criminal statute of contributing to the delinquency of a minor from the maximum age 16 to 18. The legislative intent of this bill is to require all students to start school earlier when their brains are growing and developing at a dramatic rate from birth to age 7 and to stay in school long enough to graduate. This bill allows earlier identification of children with learning disabilities and more time to take successful corrective action. This bill will not preclude parents from homeschooling children, or using charter or alternative schools, or any other of the twelve enumerated exceptions to compulsory education under AS 14.30.010(b), including completion of grade 12 or graduation from a secondary school before age 18.

The Alaska compulsory school age statute is out of date with modern educational practice and thinking. The law has not changed since territorial days when few children attended school beyond 8th grade or bothered to graduate, because most jobs did not require much education. The majority of Alaskan students today are already in school by age six and many by the minimum age five. Head Start and prekindergarten programs are growing in popularity. The state already funds a pilot pre-kindergarten program and SB 6 this year proposes funding such a program statewide.

In 1852 Massachusetts became the first state to pass compulsory school attendance laws, and by 1918 all states required children to receive an education. Today every state and territory requires children to enroll in public or private education or to be home-schooled. Thirty-two states require students to begin their education by age 6 or 5 and to remain in school until 16 or older. Twenty-four states and American Samoa set the minimum at age 6, and eight states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands set the minimum at age 5. All children are required to continue their education into their high school years, with twenty states setting the compulsory cutoff age at age 18; eleven at age 17; and nineteen states including Alaska and the Virgin Islands at age 16.

By increasing the school attendance age to 18, this bill should discourage earlier dropouts and reduce juvenile crime, teen pregnancy and other at risk behaviors. Studies have found that students without a diploma earn less than 75% of those with a diploma; they are more likely to live in poverty, go to jail, and have health problems.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development reported 8,245 students or 67.7% graduated in 2010 while 3,186 dropped out. The graduation rate of Alaska Native students was 55.4%, a group which experienced twice the dropout rate of all students. These rates remain well below the national average. The National Education Association's first priority two years ago in its "12-Point Action Plan for Reducing the School Dropout Rate" was to "mandate high school graduation or equivalency as compulsory for everyone below the age of 21." It reported:

"Just as we established compulsory attendance to the age of 16 or 17 in the beginning of the 20th century, it is appropriate and critical to eradicate the idea of 'dropping out' before achieving a diploma. To compete in the 21st century, all of our citizens, at minimum, need a high school education."

Opponents to increasing compulsory school age who are concerned about forcing students to be in the classroom against their will argue that these students may become disruptive and require more time and expense on behavior and truancy problems. This bill, however, is directed at more than just "seat time." It is to become part of a larger plan to motivate rather than to punish or ignore students. It aims to help students stay in school long enough to graduate and go on to college or better-paying jobs. Students will want to come to school, stay in school, and graduate, if academic problems are identified early and they helped long before they dropout. For those students who want to work or are not as academically inclined, school districts are encouraged to continue accredited alternative schools and work-study programs to help students earn credits toward a diploma if they must work at the same time. Coupled with early efforts to retain, train, and graduate, this bill can bring hope and success to thousands of Alaskan students who otherwise might not stay in school long enough to graduate or develop to the best of their potential.

LEGAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF LEGAL AND RESEARCH SERVICES
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY
STATE OF ALASKA

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State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
Deliveries to: 129 6th St., Rm. 329

MEMORANDUM

January 31, 2011

SUBJECT: Sectional Summary of SB 9 (Work Order No. 27-LS0085\M)

TO: Senator Bettye Davis
Chair of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee
Attn: Thomas Obermeyer

FROM: Jean M. Mischel
Legislative Counsel 

You have requested a sectional summary of the above-described bill.

As a preliminary matter, note that a sectional summary of a bill should not be considered an authoritative interpretation of the bill and the bill itself is the best statement of its contents. If you would like an interpretation of the bill as it may apply to a particular set of circumstances, please advise.

Section 1. Raises the age from 16 to 18 for the crime of contributing to the delinquency of a minor for repeated absences from school.

Section 2. Raises the compulsory school age from 16 to 18.

Section 3. Amends an exception to the compulsory school attendance age to provide for graduation for a secondary school.

JMM:ljw
11-057.ljw

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2011 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number _____
 Bill Version SB9
 () Publish Date _____

Identifier (file name) SB9-EED-ESS-2-10-11 Dept. Affected EED
 Title "An Act related to compulsory school attendance; and relating to the crime of contributing to the delinquency of a minor." Appropriation K-12 Support
 Allocation Foundation Program
 Sponsor Sen. Davis
 Requester Senate Education OMB Component Number 141

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

	Appropriation Required	Information					
		FY 2012	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
OPERATING EXPENDITURES							
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants	14,858.6						
Miscellaneous							
TOTAL OPERATING	14,858.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES							
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CHANGE IN REVENUES							
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

102 Federal Receipts							
103 GF Match							
1004 GF	14,858.6						
1005 GF/Program Receipts							
1037 GF/Mental Health							
Other (please identify)							
TOTAL	14,858.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2011) cost _____

POSITIONS

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version (if initial version, please note as such)

Prepared by Elizabeth Nudelman, Director
 Division School Finance & Facilities
 Approved by Mike Hanley
 Commissioner

Phone 465-8679
 Date/Time 2/10/11 12:00 AM
 Date 2/10/2011

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2011 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SB9

Analysis

This bill lowers the compulsory age for attendance by one year, from age 7 to 6; and extends the age of required attendance by two years, from age 16 to 18. The exception is if a student completes the 12th grade or graduates from a secondary school.

In FY2010 there were approximately 1,406 students between the ages of 16 and 18 that dropped out of public school after the October student count period. The average cost of a student run through the FY12 foundation formula is \$10,568. $1,406 \times \$10,568 = \$14,858,608$.

Thomas Obermeyer

From: Corazza, Peggy (EED) [peggy.corazza@alaska.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, November 09, 2010 2:45 PM
To: Thomas Obermeyer
Subject: Graduation Rate and Dropout Rate information
Attachments: Graduation Rate Fact Sheet.doc; Dropout Rate Fact Sheet.doc

Thomas,

As promised I have attached the Fact Sheets that we discussed. I find them most helpful for both the historical view and the explanation of the calculation. I hope to have the 2010 Dropout calculation ready next week.

Peggy Corazza
Data Manager
Assessment & Accountability
(907) 465-8418

Graduation Rates in Alaska Fact Sheet

The Graduation Rate is reported as a fraction. The numerator is the sum of the number of graduates receiving a regular diploma before June 30. The denominator is the sum of the number of graduates, plus the number of dropouts in grade nine three school years prior, plus the number of unduplicated dropouts in grade ten two school years prior, plus the number of unduplicated dropouts in grade eleven in the prior school year, plus the number of unduplicated dropouts in grade 12 during the current year, plus the number of grade 12 continuing students.

A **graduate** is defined as a student who has received a regular diploma from a state- or district-approved education program, as evidenced by receipt of a secondary school diploma from school authorities. Any student who receives a diploma under a waiver from the competency examination required under AS 14.03075 (a), as specified by the state board is considered to be a graduate. This does not include an individual who:

- receives a certificate of completion;
- receives a certificate of attendance;

The statewide Graduation Count has increased significantly over the last five years.

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Graduation Rate</u>	<u>Graduate Count</u>
2004	62.9%	7,290
2005	61.4%	6,905
2006	61.6%	7,361
2007	63.0%	7,666
2008	62.6%	7,855
2009	67.5%	8,008
2010	67.7%	8,245

The Alaska Native/American Indian Graduation Rate has shown improvement over the same five year time period:

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Graduation Rate</u>	<u>Graduate Count</u>
2004	46.1%	1,327
2005	43.2%	1,233
2006	45.1%	1,442
2007	51.2%	1,689
2008	48.1%	1,523
2009	55.4%	1,508
2010	55.4%	1,616

Please note that the new Graduation Rate required by the Final Title 1 Regulations under NCLB will use a different calculation. The new Graduation Rate, also known as the Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Rate, will follow an actual group of students across four

years of high school. Alaska will no longer be incorporating prior years' counts of dropouts to calculate the Graduation Rate.

Dropout Rates in Alaska Fact Sheet

The Dropout Rate is computed by dividing the number of dropouts in the current school year by the number of students enrolled in grades 7-12 on October 1 of the current school year. School year is defined as the 12-month period beginning with July 1 and ending June 30.

A **Dropout** is defined as a student who was enrolled in the district at some time during the school year and whose enrollment terminated. This does not include an individual who:

- graduated from high school or completed a state or district approved education program, as evidenced by receipt of formal recognition from school authorities;
- transferred to another public school, private school or state or district approved education program;
- is temporarily absent due to suspension;
- is absent due to illness or medical condition;
- died.

The statewide Dropout Rate has decreased as well as the number of dropouts for three consecutive years:

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Dropout Rate</u>	<u>Dropout Count (Grades 7-12)</u>
2005	6.0%	3,791
2006	5.8%	3,642
2007	5.5%	3,434
2008	5.2%	3,232
2009	5.2%	3,146

The Alaska Native/American Indian Dropout Rate has not reflected the proportionate decrease over the same time period:

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Dropout Rate</u>	<u>Dropout Count (Grades 7-12)</u>
2005	8.2%	1,276
2006	8.4%	1,333
2007	8.3%	1,299
2008	8.5%	1,224
2009	8.5%	1,172

In 2007-2008 Alaska showed a wide range in difference with district by district comparisons of Dropout Rates. Four districts reported 0 dropouts. Two districts reported over 25% Dropout Rates. Both districts with the highest rates, Delta/Greely School District and the Nenana City School District, had a large percentage of dropouts reported in the statewide correspondence schools.



NEA-ALASKA

Affiliated with the National Education Association

February 18, 2011

RECEIVED

FEB 21 2011

Sen. Bettye Davis
Room 30, State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Davis:

Thank you for your introduction of Senate Bill 9, "An Act relating to compulsory school attendance; and relating to the crime of contributing to the delinquency of a minor."

On behalf of NEA-Alaska's nearly 13,000 public school employees and retired members I am privileged to offer this letter of support for the passage of Senate Bill 9.

Each January, for the past 55 years, elected NEA-Alaska delegates from Ketchikan to Barrow gather in Anchorage to set policy for the year. A few weeks ago, those 400 elected delegates affirmed their support for legislation to expand the age of compulsory school attendance and to address the problem of truancy in Alaska's public schools. As president of NEA-Alaska and as a 30 year teacher in Western Alaska I know firsthand the issue of children deciding to end their education on their 16th birthday. In this global economy, a high school diploma is a minimum for Alaska's children entering adulthood.

This legislation will help keep children in school and tracking towards their graduation. NEA-Alaska urges passage of Senate Bill 9 by the 27th Alaska Legislature.

NEA-Alaska applauds your efforts to improve K-12 education in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Barb Angaiak
President



NEA's 12-Point Action Plan for Reducing the School Dropout Rate

To address the nation's school dropout crisis, NEA has developed a 12-point action plan that includes the most promising actions supported by experience and data.

1. Mandate high school graduation or equivalency as compulsory for everyone below the age of 21. Just as we established compulsory attendance to the age of 16 or 17 in the beginning of the 20th century, it is appropriate and critical to eradicate the idea of "dropping out" before achieving a diploma. To compete in the 21st century, all of our citizens, at minimum, need a high school education.
2. Establish high school graduation centers for students 19-21 years old to provide specialized instruction and counseling to all students in this older age group who would be more effectively addressed in classes apart from younger students.
3. Make sure students receive individual attention in safe schools, in smaller learning communities within large schools, in small classes (18 or fewer students), and in programs during the summer, weekends, and before and after school that provide tutoring and build on what students learn during the school day.
4. Expand students' graduation options through creative partnerships with community colleges in career and technical fields and with alternative schools so that students have another way to earn a high school diploma. For students who are incarcerated, tie their release to high school graduation at the end of their sentences.
5. Increase career education and workforce readiness programs in schools so that students see the connection between school and careers after graduation. To ensure that students have the skills they need for these careers, integrate 21st century skills into the curriculum and provide all students with access to 21st century technology.
6. Act early so students do not drop out with high-quality, universal preschool and full-day kindergarten; strong elementary programs that ensure students are doing grade-level work when they enter middle school; and middle school programs that address causes of dropping out that appear in these grades and ensure that students have access to algebra, science, and other courses that serve as the foundation for success in high school and beyond.
7. Involve families in students' learning at school and at home in new and creative ways so that all families—single-parent families, families in poverty, and families in minority communities—can support their children's academic achievement, help their children engage in healthy behaviors, and stay actively involved in their children's education from preschool through high school.

graduation.

8. Monitor students' academic progress in school through a variety of measures during the school year that provide a full picture of students' learning and help teachers make sure students do not fall behind academically.
9. Monitor, accurately report, and work to reduce dropout rates by gathering accurate data for key student groups (such as racial, ethnic, and economic), establishing benchmarks in each state for eliminating dropouts, and adopting the standardized reporting method developed by the National Governors Association.
10. Involve the entire community in dropout prevention through family-friendly policies that provide release time for employees to attend parent-teacher conferences; work schedules for high school students that enable them to attend classes on time and be ready to learn; "adopt a school" programs that encourage volunteerism and community-led projects in school; and community-based, real-world learning experiences for students.
11. Make sure educators have the training and resources they need to prevent students from dropping out including professional development focused on the needs of diverse students and students who are at risk of dropping out; up-to-date textbooks and materials, computers, and information technology; and safe modern schools.
12. Make high school graduation a federal priority by calling on Congress and the president to invest \$10 billion over the next 10 years to support dropout prevention programs and states who make high school graduation compulsory.

For the Spanish version of this plan, see [El Plan de la NEA para Reducir el Abandono de los Estudios](#).

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Thomas Obermeyer

From: Sunny Deye [sunny.deye@ncsl.org]
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 7:59 AM
To: Thomas Obermeyer
Subject: RE: Alaska State Legislature Senate Bill 9 - Increasing compulsory school age to 18
Attachments: NCSL Dropout Task Force Recommendations.pdf

Hi Tom,
Attached is the NCSL Dropout Task Force report, released just this week.
Here is the online link: <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?TabId=22196>

As I mentioned, I will FedEx 10 copies to you now – you will have them in the morning.
Below are the relevant portions. I will be in touch soon with more information.

Best,
Sunny

Sunny Deye
Program Principal, College and Career Readiness
National Conference of State Legislatures
7700 East First Place
Denver, CO 80230
303-856-1469

One of the recommendations of the NCSL Task Force on School Dropout Prevention and Recovery – “Conduct policy audits, eliminate counterproductive policies and provide incentives for collaboration” includes a paragraph about raising the school compulsory age, as follows (see embedded references). Note that the second study actually credits, in part, raising the compulsory school age to 17 for Tennessee’s 15-point improvement in grad rates from 2002 to 2008 (see p. 28 of the Balfanz report):

Evidence suggests that raising the maximum compulsory school age above 16 curtails dropout rates and produces other positive results.^[i] Until recently, a majority of states permitted students to drop out of high school at the age of 16; now 32 states have set their compulsory school age to 17 or 18.^[ii] States can make maximum compulsory school attendance requirements more meaningful by revoking work permits and driving privileges of students who drop out before the state-set minimum school-leaving age. States also can require that students who withdraw from school before graduation receive information not only about the economic consequences of dropping out, but also how they can complete their high school diploma after they do so.

^[i] John M. Bridgeland, John J. Dilulio Jr., and Ryan Streeter, *Raising the School Compulsory Attendance Age: The Case for Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises, 2007).

<http://www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/raisingschoolage.pdf>

^[ii] Robert Balfanz et al., *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic* (Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises, Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University and America's Promise Alliance, November 2010).

<http://www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/gradnation.pdf>

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/HIS-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!

unny

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
December 1, 2007*



Attending to Learn: The Implications of Raising the Compulsory Age for School Attendance

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Recommendations

The Task Force believes that Maryland must do more to engage children and keep them in school. However, the Task Force agrees that in isolation, a change in the compulsory attendance age will not reduce the dropout rate. The reality is a policy change can require students to attend school, but it can't make them learn. Whether the students benefit from being in school depends largely upon the programs and support they receive there. Accordingly, the Task Force supports the implementation of these recommendations, and the engagement of students at an earlier age, in order to address the needs of children at risk of dropping out of school. In the context of strengthened, expanded supports for the students who would be affected, students who would otherwise drop out, would, of their own volition, choose to remain in school and earn a diploma. Thereby, addressing the issue of legally mandating students to remain in school would become unnecessary.

Recommendation One

Establish a statewide initiative that will:

- a) Be flexible while maintaining a consistent approach to meeting the needs of 16- to -18 year old dropouts and potential dropouts, regardless of where they live or attended school;
- b) Expand the data collection work on existing dropout-prevention and re-entry programs that has been done, and design and implement a program to analyze the effectiveness of these dropout-prevention programs;
- c) Establish pilot model programs based on proven or promising approaches, and evaluate their success prior to statewide implementation. (Consideration should be given to geographic location, size, and diversity of school systems.);
- d) Provide an infrastructure (people, organization, time of day, location, resources, community and family involvement), and identify reallocation of funding and new funding that guarantee effective interagency services and assure increased numbers of students will stay in school and graduate; and,
- e) Examine articulation and funding agreements and formulas among agencies and institutions to determine which of these enhance students' opportunities and which serve as barriers.

efforts; provide professional development; and allocate the resources, both financial and otherwise, to ensure that all Maryland students maximize their educational potential.

Rationale

If the compulsory attendance age is raised, Maryland will immediately need to put in place a system of supports and services for students who under the previous requirement would have dropped out, and for those young adults who have already dropped out but will be required to return to school. A statewide framework must be built to accommodate these students; this multi-faceted recommendation can serve as the blueprint.

Before Maryland puts dropout prevention and intervention programs and practices in place, devoting staff, resources, and time, we must know that these programs and practices will be effective.

Task Force research on current practices and programs included collecting data from school systems on existing programs. Members analyzed the evidence shared by districts, and examined the findings of national longitudinal dropout studies. This process revealed weaknesses in data collected on programs across the state. Task Force findings in this area included the following:

- There is a significant discrepancy among districts in what is identified as an alternative education or dropout-prevention program.
- The data evaluating these programs are inconsistent.
- It is difficult, if not impossible, to compare the costs per student of these programs.

Better data collection is essential to confirming programs' success before statewide implementation. It is also essential for reasons of accountability. Although there are programs that address at-risk students, there have been limited studies done on the effectiveness of these programs. This lack of robust data has inhibited the Task Force from making more specific recommendations regarding the designs of ideal dropout-prevention and re-entry programs. Scant data has also constrained this Task Force's analysis of the need for alternative programming, the additional years to educate students, and the associated costs. Before moving forward with costly initiatives, it is imperative that evidence-based decisions be made that support both the need for change, as well as the justification for funding.

A review of promising practices in other states indicated a significant expense (around \$200 million dollars per year) to simply raise the compulsory age requirement to 18 under the present school environment and current instructional delivery systems. The additional expenses associated with truly alternative programs—over and above the school systems' commitment to the typical child served—should be based on research that has taken place in Maryland, with Maryland children, ideally in multiple settings. The analysis of these pilot programs would then

inform further discussion of the fiscal support needed for an alternative program to meet the needs of Maryland's students, teachers, businesses, and families.

Recommendation Two

Support and promote the awarding of a High School Diploma by Assessment as a valid credential, and work with the federal government to remove any disincentives for recognizing a high school diploma earned by passing the national GED Tests.

Rationale

The traditional route to the diploma must remain the preferred pathway. However, Maryland must acknowledge that the traditional, four-year high school experience is an unrealistic expectation for some children. Alternatives, including the awarding of a High School Diploma by Assessment through the GED Tests, must be provided, supported, and promoted. Maryland must support and promote alternative pathways for those students for whom it is appropriate. Certainly, these pathways should not be promoted to every child at risk of dropping out.

INCREASE ACCESS TO GED INSTRUCTION AND TESTING

GED instructional programs should be more effectively publicized and more widely available. Schools should be encouraged to distribute accurate information about local GED instructional programs, including the cost of testing, both to students who have already dropped out of school and to students at risk of dropping out. Students also need to know that a High School Diploma by Assessment is a valid credential to enter Maryland community colleges. They also need to know that without a college degree their future income potential is limited compared to that of a college graduate. One opportunity for providing this information is the exit interview that COMAR requires of all students who withdraw from Maryland public schools. In order to implement this recommendation, instructional programs and testing services would need to be expanded. For example, demand for GED instruction exceeds current capacity.

IMPLEMENT THE "GED OPTION" PROGRAM

Maryland students wishing to attempt the GED Tests must first drop out of school to conform to the American Council on Education (ACE) requirement. ACE does offer an alternative for targeted students who remain in school. The GED Option program targets students who are able to complete high school requirements, but who, for a variety of circumstances, are behind in the credits needed to graduate with their class. With the GED Option, the student remains enrolled and attends high school for at least 15 hours of instruction per week. This

instruction includes not only GED preparation, but also workforce development skills and/or career and technology education. As the GED Tests are a valid method of earning a diploma, Maryland should consider implementing the GED Option program, which has been adopted in 11 states, including New York and Virginia. To implement a similar GED Option in Maryland, the State Board of Education would need to amend COMAR to recognize the GED Option program as an approved pathway leading to a Maryland high school diploma.

REMOVE DISINCENTIVES

The GED Tests are a valid route to the diploma and should be promoted as such, regardless of how the federal government categorizes GED Tests under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Currently, NCLB requires Maryland to count its graduates with a High School Diploma by Assessment as dropouts. As a result, these students negatively affect the school, school system, and state graduation rates, which are used in the determination of Adequate Yearly Progress. There is much at stake here for schools and school systems. Those not making Adequate Yearly Progress are subject to a series of escalating consequences that include corrective actions and complete restructuring of the school or school system. It is easy to see why a school or school system might not promote the GED program as positively or as often as it should. This is a damaging disincentive to meeting students' needs, and it must be eliminated. This Task Force urges the Maryland Congressional delegation to work with the Congress and the President to amend No Child Left Behind to allow students who earn a GED to be counted as high school graduates. Implementing this recommendation would increase Maryland's high school graduates by five percent (based on FY 2006 data).

CHOOSE DIPLOMA PATHS INDIVIDUALLY

Identifying the GED Tests as the most appropriate path for a student to earn a diploma must be done with careful consideration for each student. However, the GED Tests are not appropriate or attainable for every child. Some students, including some English Language Learners and some students with special needs, would not be successful on the GED Tests. Together, parents, school personnel, and the student must review the student's skills, needs, and future goals against all of the diploma routes and choose the best one for the student.

Recommendation Three

Create multiple pathways to the Maryland High School Diploma for students with disabilities and English Language Learners. These diploma pathways should include these options: work study beginning in grade 9; a five-year high school program; and instruction at times outside of the traditional school schedule.

Rationale

Raising the compulsory attendance age alone will not produce more high school graduates. Indeed, whether the compulsory attendance age is raised or not, other actions and new alternatives to help students complete a path to graduation are needed. Particularly in need of alternatives to traditional high school programs are students with disabilities and students with little or no English language skills, referred to as English Language Learners.

Flexible, alternative routes to the Maryland High School Diploma will provide these students additional opportunities to be successful. Allowing five-year high school programs, for example, will allow more time for remediation for students having difficulty passing the High School Assessments. The additional time may also be used to meet the requirements for a Maryland High School Diploma. Another consideration in creating these diploma pathways is the age of English Language Learners at the time of enrollment. For example, an English Language Learner may enroll in high school at age 17 speaking no English. To be successful, some students may need to be enrolled for a period of time past age 18.

An alternative route to the Maryland High School Diploma that offers instruction outside of the traditional school schedule is also essential. It is not unusual for some families to place obligations (e.g., working to support the family or supervising siblings) on students that make it difficult for the students to fully participate in school. A flexible schedule with opportunities for learning in the evening, on the weekend, or during the summer would allow these students to attend school while still fulfilling their familial responsibilities.

Based on student feedback on a Maryland school district survey (Cecil County Public Schools, 2007), a five-year high school program could address the special needs of students at risk by providing:

- Additional help in academic subjects;
- Work-study opportunities that can be built into student schedules beginning at an earlier age; and,
- Additional time to meet graduation requirements, including the High School Assessments.

Alternate formats and creative solutions for instruction may enable students to complete their education. For example, school schedules may use part-time day classes; combine part-time day classes with night school; and/or include work study and technical post-secondary education.

Recommendation Four

The State Board of Education must adopt a definition of alternative education that addresses different modes of instruction and appropriate strategies for current dropouts and for children and young adults at risk of dropping out.

Rationale

Unlike several other states, Maryland has no formal definition of alternative education. This omission must be addressed promptly. Adopting a formal definition in state regulations is necessary: to ensure that alternative education programs deliver instruction that meets content standards; to offer appropriate, targeted courses that enable students to reintegrate into a comprehensive school when ready; to address individual learning styles of students; and generally to meet standards for education as set forth by the Maryland State Board of Education. The Task Force must emphasize that flexible schedules should be considered for these programs to meet the needs of students with personal obligations such as job responsibilities and other family obligations.

A review of the literature and current practices for alternative education programs across the nation revealed common types of program locations and common elements of quality practice and programming, summarized below.

Alternative Education Program Locations

- Separate room or teacher within a comprehensive high school where additional services are provided
- School within a comprehensive high school
- Separate facility

(Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction)

Elements of Quality Practice and Programming

- Low student/teacher ratio
- Accredited
- Authority to grant credentials (High School Diplomas or GED)

- Credit recovery (allowing students the opportunity to make up credits that were lost due to failure)
- Certified teachers
- Flexible scheduling
- Strong relationships with the district office and other high schools
- Private funding and/or public-private partnerships

(Source: State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction)

To support students, alternative education models need to offer a range of services and instruction, including anger management; small group instruction; some individualized instruction; computerized, self-paced instruction; guidance services; and study skills. Strong, consistent and persistent support services are critical to students' success.

In crafting a regulatory definition for alternative programs, the State Board of Education should consider the aforementioned program locations, elements of quality practice and programming, and range of services and instruction. Also important to the process is encouraging and considering the input of stakeholders, such as local school systems, higher education, community organizations, experts in alternative programs, parents, and students.

During the process of developing the alternative program definition, the State Board of Education and/or Maryland State Department of Education should also work to change perceptions of alternative programs. Too often, alternative education programs carry a reputation in their respective communities as programs for "bad kids." This view must be changed as an alternative program infrastructure is put into place. While these programs do serve some students with behavioral problems, they also serve many other students who do not have behavior issues but do require an alternative educational setting in order to be successful. Alternative programs have great potential for helping children achieve success; communities must understand this so they can get involved with and support the school and its students.

Recommendation Five

Should the compulsory age of attendance be raised to 18, Maryland should provide the adequate financial support to raise the age of compulsory attendance to age 18.

Rationale

This Task Force has identified many, but not all, of the costs that would be associated with an increase in the compulsory attendance age. Raising the compulsory attendance age can be done responsibly and effectively only by providing the resources necessary to engage all students at a young age and keep them engaged until they successfully complete high school.

While it is not the job of this Task Force to identify specific funding sources necessary to support an increase in the compulsory attendance age, or otherwise implement these recommendations, students will not benefit from an unfunded mandate. The subcommittee recognized that much more than an infusion of money would be necessary to effect this legislated change should it come to fruition. Preparation time would need to be built into the implementation date to allow systems to hire and professionally develop additional teachers, build additional classrooms, purchase and outfit relocatable classrooms, order needed textbooks and supplies, redraw school boundaries, analyze transportation needs, account for the special needs of the physically and educationally disabled students returning or remaining, and include the appropriate amount of money in the local school boards' funding requests to the local political jurisdictions in time to meet all of the deadlines for adequate consideration in the budgetary process. Public-private partnerships may need to be explored as the State and local school systems attempt to marshal sufficient resources to implement any changes to the compulsory age of attendance.

Recommendation Six

Appoint a group to study Maryland's existing truancy courts, examine their structure, assess their effectiveness, and, if appropriate, make a recommendation for expanding truancy courts statewide.

Rationale

Currently, Maryland lacks an established system of support and consequences for frequently truant students. And while Maryland has established consequences for parents/guardians, they are rarely enforced. Without enforcement in place, the compulsory attendance law is insignificant, and raising the compulsory attendance age will have little or no influence on keeping students in school. Therefore, the State should consider a truancy court system in each county to instill hope, improve student attendance, enhance achievement, and reduce delinquent behavior through a proactive partnership of schools, courts, and families.

Truancy courts currently exist in several Maryland counties, but data on their effectiveness is not known. Truancy courts have been used with strong success in several states, including North Carolina, where a newly developed truancy court has successfully transformed truant elementary and middle school students in two counties into perfect or nearly perfect attendance students. According to Judge Richard Chaney of Durham, North Carolina, only one student failed to graduate high school out of the students who regularly came into his courtroom. In St. Louis County, Missouri, a three-year evaluation of the truancy court showed 60 percent of students significantly improved their attendance rates, reducing absences by an average of 44

percent (St. Louis County Truancy Court, 2005). Additionally, in Ingham County, Michigan, approximately 63 percent of the 600 students referred to truancy court in the first two years have improved their attendance (Burton, 2003). Dramatic successes have also been found in Delaware. In 2003, 55 percent of the 739 students with cases closed achieved overall compliance with the truancy court; 94 percent of the students achieving full compliance remained in school at the end of the year; 70 percent of all students were still in school at the end of the year; and, 66 percent of all 2002 students involved with the truancy court continued to remain in school more than a year later (State of Delaware Justice of the Peace Court, 2003).

Should truancy courts be established, Maryland should consider a system whereby each truancy court works closely with the local State's Attorneys office, Sheriff's department, Department of Social Services, local leaders, and local boards of education to ensure compliance with compulsory attendance laws.

A statewide truancy court system should consider targeting students who were absent between 10 and 30 times. One judge, volunteer or appointed, per court could handle truancy cases once a week before or after school. The truancy judge would review a student's attendance, behavior, and academic performance. After an accumulation of multiple absences, the student would be placed on probation. If there is no improvement, the student might face community service, juvenile detention, or parental supervision in school.

The court would also intervene with issues underlying a student's truancy, including depression and drug and/or alcohol abuse, and make the appropriate referrals and placements.

Suggestions for keeping students in school through the truancy court system include transportation assistance; parent participation; counseling; parenting classes; support groups; and positive reinforcement, such as praise for small accomplishments and rewards for attendance and compliance with the truancy system.



Building a Grad Nation

Progress and Challenge in Ending
the High School Dropout Epidemic

November 2010

A report by

Civic Enterprises

Everyone Graduates Center

at Johns Hopkins University

America's Promise Alliance

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Pearson Foundation

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Setting Clear and High Academic and Graduation Standards

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.

Combating Chronic Absenteeism

In the past few years, there has been growing awareness that communities with low graduation rates often have very high rates of chronic absenteeism from the early elementary grades forward. Recently, a number of communities have begun to organize to establish the norm that every student should be in school every day. Both Baltimore and New York City have launched joint efforts involving the school system and city agencies to create multi-pronged efforts to provide the range of supports needed to get more students to attend school on a regular basis. In addition, a new national effort called Attendance Counts has launched a website to spread best practices.⁴⁵ The federal government and most states and districts, however, do not track or report chronic absenteeism (commonly defined as missing a month or more of school) at the school or district level, instead focusing on aggregate attendance that can often mask serious chronic absenteeism challenges.

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.

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45 www.attendancecounts.org

A PATH TO GRADUATION FOR EVERY CHILD

STATE LEGISLATIVE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A REPORT OF THE NCSL TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

By Sunny Deyé



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January 2011

3. TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The state legislature plays a critical role in raising public awareness about the dropout problem; setting expectations for schools and districts and holding them accountable; and providing the data infrastructure to help schools and districts identify and support struggling students. The following recommendations identify how legislators can be most effective in dropout prevention and recovery efforts.

Create and sustain urgency to improve high school graduation rates

Legislatures can make it a state priority to improve high school graduation rates. Legislatures cannot do this alone, however. We must help organize and participate in powerful partnerships among key stakeholders, including legislators, governors, superintendents, state boards of education, educators, community-based organizations, parents, and business leaders. These stakeholders each play a critical role in developing the many options and solutions necessary to help all kids navigate a path to graduation and beyond.

Creating or participating in a statewide task force, advisory board, commission, office or other entity that can take a long-term view of the state dropout problem indicates bipartisan support, brings statewide visibility to the dropout problem, and raises awareness among the media and constituents. When legislators establish or participate in such a process, we send the message that improving dropout rates is a state legislative priority and that stakeholders have allies in the legislature who can codify their efforts in statute.

States need to set ambitious goals for improving high school graduation rates, and legislatures are well-positioned to ensure that state goals are understood by the public; that progress is accounted for and recognized; and that incentives and resources are available to help schools and districts meet state goals. Publicizing the goal and state progress will help inform citizens, parents and students about the costs and consequences of dropping out, and the many options available to keep kids on the path to graduation.

Task Force Recommendations

- Create and sustain urgency to improve high school graduation rates.
- Insist on high expectations and a rigorous curriculum for all students.
- Provide options and pathways to engage all students.
- Put excellent teachers, principals, and other caring adults in schools.
- Identify and support struggling students.
- Develop dropout recovery programs to reengage out-of-school youth.
- Build capacity to transform or replace low graduation-rate high schools.
- Conduct policy audits, eliminate counterproductive policies and provide incentives for collaboration.
- Hold schools and districts accountable for improving high school graduation rates.

4. CALL TO ACTION

The costs of dropping out are high—to the student; to the states; and to the nation. For students who do not earn their high school diploma, the future is grim. We no longer live in a society where high school dropouts can earn a living wage. Not only do dropouts see a significant decrease in earning power and workforce opportunities, but they also are far more likely to spend their lives periodically unemployed, on government assistance, or cycling in and out of the prison system.³⁹ Each high school dropout is a loss to our states and communities through costs to society, diminished quality of life, and—most importantly—loss of productive, engaged citizens.

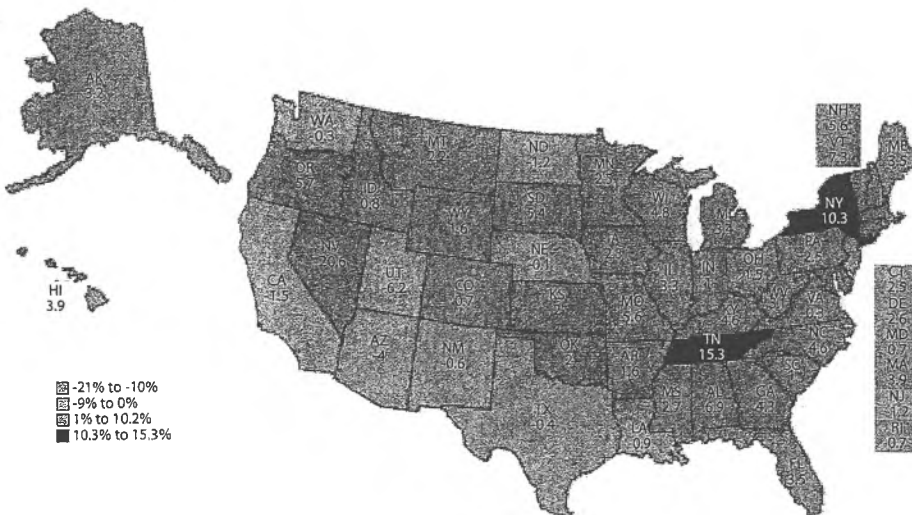
The current economic crisis offers an opportunity to act. The economic downturn has wreaked havoc on state budgets, forcing difficult choices and driving important conversations about state economic priorities, responsibilities and accountability. The current crisis in state budgets is expected to continue for several more years. It provides an opportunity to pare duplicate services; hold agencies accountable for improving results; and find new ways to collaborate, share information, and ensure that state policy environments provide incentives for improving high school graduation rates.

State legislators must be leaders in dropout prevention and recovery and set the expectation that

all students will successfully graduate from high school ready for success in college, careers and life. The time is now—we cannot wait until the current economic crisis subsides. We must take advantage of this opportunity to reexamine our expectations, policies and processes to ensure that schools and districts have every incentive and opportunity to help kids navigate a path to graduation and beyond.

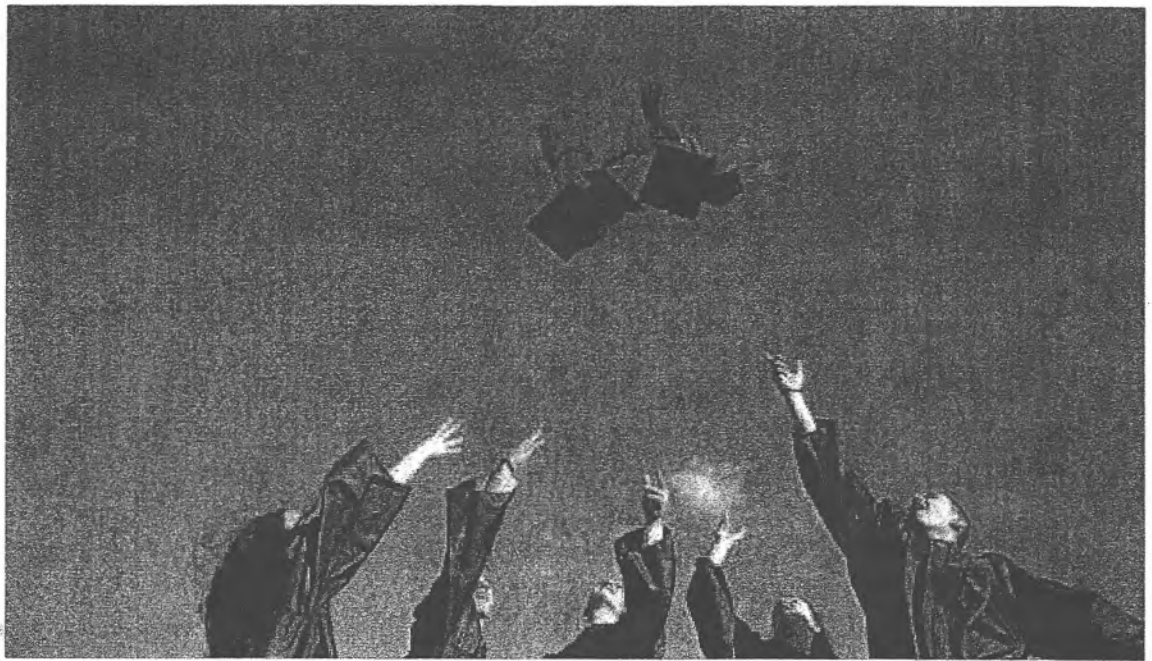
This is our responsibility and thus our call to action: We must ensure that graduating every child means graduating every child. The clock is ticking for our children, our states and our nation.

Figure 7. Percentage Change in Graduation Rates, 2001-2002 to 2007-2008, by State



Note: Data for South Carolina from 2006-2007; 2007-2008 data not available.

Source: U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2008 Compendium Report* (December 2010); Chris Chapman, National Center for Education Statistics; Jennifer Laird, MPR Associates Inc.; Angelina KewalRamani, Education Statistics Services Institute American Institutes for Research.



States Making Great Gains

The education recommendations, policy guidelines and legislation that state lawmakers have put in place during the past decade are playing a vital role in decreasing the number of students who drop out of high school in Tennessee and Alabama.

A new report shows positive signs that states are making progress in reducing the number of students who drop out of high school. The report—released in November 2010 by the America’s Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises and Johns Hopkins University’s Everyone Graduates Center—highlights successful case studies in Tennessee and Alabama. It acknowledges the role of state legislators in creating policy environments that have helped increase high school graduation rates, including strong leadership with clear graduation rate goals; collaboration among many sectors that is guided by data; commitment to innovation and continuous improvement; technical assistance for evidence-based solutions; and high expectations, better policies and more support for students.

Tennessee: From 2002 to 2008, Tennessee led the nation in increasing its high school graduation rate from just under 60 percent to 75 percent. Researchers credit a statewide approach that included collaboration and coordination among stakeholders; setting clear and high statewide expectations; effectively using data to improve teaching and learning; and improving technical assistance to struggling schools.

Alabama: Between 2002 and 2008, Alabama’s high school graduation rate increased from 62 percent to 69 percent. Researchers credit leadership from state policymakers that made drop-out prevention and increased graduation rates a statewide priority; set clear and high statewide expectations and standards for students; built capacity for comprehensive school improvement, including state-sponsored professional development and training; and provided intensive supports to students to finish high school.

Source: Robert Balfanz, John M. Bridgeland, Laura A. Moore and Joanna Hornig Fox, *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic* (Washington, D.C.: Civic Enterprises, Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University and America’s Promise Alliance, November 2010); <http://www.every1graduates.org/gradnation.html>.



Education Program

Compulsory Education

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Overview

More than 150 years have passed since Horace Mann helped Massachusetts establish a statewide system of education that eventually led to the requirement that all children attend public school. In 1852, Massachusetts became the first state to pass compulsory school attendance laws, and by 1918, all states required children to receive an education.

Compulsory Education Requirements

Today, every state and territory requires children to enroll in public or private education or to be home-schooled. More than half—32 states—require students to begin their education by age 6. Some states' set their age requirements as low as age 5 and as high as age 8. All children are required to continue their education into their high school years, with 26 states setting the cutoff age at 16. The remaining states require students to stay in school through age 17 or 18.

Compulsory education laws vary greatly from state to state. While some states use a student's date of birth to determine the beginning and ending dates for compulsory education, other states require a student to begin school if he or she will turn 6 during the school year and require a student to remain in school until completion of the school year in which he or she turns 17. Four states—Arizona, Montana, Vermont and Wyoming—require students to remain in school through a specified grade. 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.

Kindergarten Enrollment

States and territories also set a minimum age for children to enroll in kindergarten, which is typically one or two years earlier than the compulsory education age. Every state or territory with a policy on this issue has established age 5 as the minimum age. However, six states—Colorado, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania—leave this decision up to local education agencies. In addition to the age requirement, each state also sets a date by which students must have attained the specified age in order to attend kindergarten. The cutoff dates range from August 1 in Indiana and Missouri to Jan. 1 in Connecticut and Vermont.

The School Age Debate

School attendance ages are often controversial. Many early childhood experts argue that if policymakers establish early cutoff dates for kindergarten, they should also establish aggressive school readiness programs to ensure students' success. Others argue that because there has been an increased emphasis on early childhood development and school readiness, we should continue to challenge children at a younger age. Some experts assert that age may be an arbitrary indicator or measure of a child's ability to succeed in school and should not be used at all. Others point out that when a state considers legislation, such as Nebraska, allowing younger children to enter kindergarten, policymakers must understand that there is likely to be a large increase in the number of children entering kindergarten during the first year of the new policy, thereby straining already tight school district budgets and increasing the need for teachers.

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The age through which students must attend school can also be controversial. To encourage more students to attend institutions of higher education and to decrease dropout rates, juvenile crime and teen pregnancy, some state legislatures have increased the school attendance requirement to age 17 or 18. Opponents are concerned about forcing students to be in the classroom against their will. They say that these students may become disruptive and may require teachers and principals to spend more time and resources disciplining such students for disruptive or violent behavior and truancy. They also point out that there probably will be a greater need for funding, teachers and classrooms for alternative education.

State Action

Many state legislatures continue to debate school attendance policies. During the 2005 legislative session, Indiana changed their kindergarten enrollment date from July 1st to August 1st. During the 2004 legislative session, at least seven states enacted legislation regarding compulsory education. Alaska extended the required school age for a child who is six years of age on or before Sept. 1 following the beginning of the school year, and who is under the age of 20 and has not completed the 12th grade. Illinois increased the compulsory school age from 16 to 17 years of age, with certain exceptions. Kansas and Kentucky will both, under specific circumstances, grant exemptions from compulsory attendance. Nebraska changed the mandatory ages for compulsory education beginning in the 2005-06 school year to age of 6 by Jan. 1 of the current school year through the age of 17, with certain exceptions. In New York, local school districts will have the power to require minors from 16 to 17 years of age to attend full time day instruction. Finally, Virginia strengthened the mechanisms for enforcement of the compulsory school attendance law.

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Compulsory School Age Requirements

Updated by Melodye Bush

Last Updated June 2010

Summary

Compulsory school attendance refers to the minimum and maximum age required by each state in which a student must be enrolled in and attending public school or some equivalent education program defined by the law.

The vast majority of states include an added clause providing for pupils to be released from compulsory attendance requirements upon graduation of high school, regardless of their age.

Arizona, Vermont and Wyoming all exempt children from compulsory attendance requirements upon completion of the 10th grade.

Five states – Virginia, South Dakota, Nevada, Maryland and Connecticut – **allow the minimum compulsory age to be extended by at least one year if the parent(s) obtain a waiver from their assigned school.**

Nearly half of all states allow children ranging from age 14 to 18 to be exempt from the compulsory attendance requirement if they meet one or more of the following stipulations: are employed, have a physical or mental condition that makes the child's attendance infeasible, have passed the 8th-grade level, have their parents' permission, have the permission of the district court or the local school board, meet the requirements for an exit interview, or have arranged alternative education such as vocational or technical school. Endnotes are provided for Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts and Virginia as examples of such legislation.

Part I: Age Ranges

Minimum compulsory age and corresponding number of states:

- Age 5: 8 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands
- Age 6: 24 states and American Samoa
- Age 7: 16 states
- Age 8: 2 states

Maximum compulsory age and corresponding number of states:

- Age 16: 19 states and the Virgin Islands
- Age 17: 11 states
- Age 18: 20 states and the District of Columbia, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico

State/Territory	Requirement	Citation
(Shaded line indicates change)		
Alabama	7-17	ALA. CODE § 16-28-3
Alaska	7-16	ALASKA STAT. 14.30.010
Arizona	6-16 or completion of grade 10	ARIZ. REV. STAT. § 15-802, §15-802-D-2
Arkansas ¹	5-17	ARK. STAT. ANN. § 6-18-201
California	6-18	CAL. EDUC. CODE § 48200
Colorado	6-17	COLO. REV. STAT. § 22-33-104
Connecticut ²	5-18	CONN. GEN. STAT. § 10-184
Delaware	5-16	14 DEL. CODE ANN. §2702
District of Columbia	5-18	D.C. CODE ANN. § 38-202
Florida	6-16	FLA. STAT. § 1003.21
Georgia	6-16	GA. CODE ANN. § 20-2-690.1
Hawaii	6-18	HAW. REV. STAT. § 302A-1132
Idaho	7-16	IDAHO CODE § 33-202
Illinois	7-17	105 ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN. 5/26-1
Indiana ³	7-18	IND. CODE ANN. § 20-33-2-6; § 22-33-2-9(B)
Iowa	6-16	IOWA CODE §299.1A
Kansas	7-18	KAN. STAT. ANN. § 72-1111
Kentucky	6-16	KY. REV. STAT. ANN. § 159.010
Louisiana ⁴	7-18	LA. REV. STAT. ANN. § 17:221
Maine	7-17	ME. REV. STAT. ANN. § TIT. 20A, § 3271
Maryland	5-16	MD. CODE ANN., EDUC. § 7-301
Massachusetts ⁵	6-16	MASS. REGS. CODE TIT. 603. § 8.02 MASS. GEN. LAWS ANN. CH. 76 § 1
Michigan	6-18	MICH. STAT. ANN. § 380.1561
Minnesota	7-16	MINN. STAT. § 120A.22
Mississippi	6-17	MISS. CODE ANN. § 37-13-91
Missouri	7-17	MO. REV. STAT. § 167.031
Montana ⁶	7-16	MONT. CODE ANN. § 20-5-102
Nebraska	6-18	NEB. REV. STAT. ANN. § 79-201
Nevada	7-18	NEV. REV. STAT. ANN. § 392.040
New Hampshire ⁷	6-18 (effective 7/01/09)	N.H. REV. STAT. ANN. § 193.1
New Jersey	6-16	N.J. REV. STAT. §18A:38-25
New Mexico	5-18	N.M. STAT. ANN. § 22-8-2; § 22-12-2; § 22-8-2 m(3)
New York ⁸	6-16	N.Y. EDUC. LAW § 3205
North Carolina	7-16	N.C. GEN. STAT. § 115C-378
North Dakota	7-16	N.D. CENT. CODE § 15.1-20-01
Ohio	6-18	OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 3321.01
Oklahoma	5-18	70 OKLA. STAT. TIT. 70, § 10-105
Oregon	7-18	OR. REV. STAT. § 339.010
Pennsylvania	8-17	PA. STAT. ANN. § 13-1326
Rhode Island	6-16	R.I. GEN. LAWS § 16-19-1
South Carolina ⁹	5-17	S.C. CODE ANN. § 59-65-10
South Dakota	6-18 (effective 7/01/09)	S.D. CODIFIED LAWS § 13-27-1
Tennessee ¹⁰	6-17	TENN. CODE ANN. § 49-6-3001 (C)(1)
Texas ¹¹	6-18	TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. § 25.085
Utah	6-18	UTAH CODE ANN. § 53A-11-101
Vermont	6-16 or completion of grade 10	VT. STAT. ANN. TIT. 16 § 1121
Virginia ¹²	5-18	VA. CODE ANN. § 22.1-254
Washington	8-18	WASH. REV. CODE § 28A.225.010
West Virginia	6-17	W. VA. CODE § 18-8-1
Wisconsin	6-18	WIS. STAT. § 118.15
Wyoming	7-16 or completion of grade 10	WYO. STAT. ANN. § 21-4-102

State/Territory	Requirement	Citation
(Shaded line indicates change)		
Am. Samoa	6-18	ASCA 16-3-16.0302
Puerto Rico	5-18	3 P.R. LAWS ANN. § 143B
Virgin Islands	5-16	V.I. CODE ANN. TIT. 17, § 82

Notes:

¹ Arkansas: "Any parent, guardian, or other person residing within the state and having custody or charge of any child may elect for the child not to attend kindergarten if the child will not be age six on September 15 of that particular school year."

² Connecticut: "The parent or person having control of a child five years of age shall have the option of not sending the child to school until the child is six years of age and the parent or person having control of a child six years of age shall have the option of not sending the child to school until the child is seven years of age."

³ Indiana: An individual is required to stay in school until he or she: graduates; is between 16 and 18 and meets the requirements for an exit interview; or reaches at least 18 years of age. Withdrawal before 18 requires parent/guardian's and principal's written permission.

⁴ Louisiana: "A child between the ages of seventeen and eighteen may withdraw from school prior to graduation if both the following circumstances exist: (a) The written consent of his parents, tutor, or legal guardian. (b) An exit interview is conducted where the student and his parent, tutor, or legal guardian provide written acknowledgment that withdrawal from school shall likely reduce the student's future earning potential and increase the student's likelihood of being unemployed in the future. During such exit interview, a student who is withdrawing from school shall be given information that has been prepared and supplied by the Louisiana Workforce Commission regarding available training and employment opportunity programs, provided such information is available."

⁵ Massachusetts: "Every child between the minimum and maximum ages established for school attendance by the board of education, except a child between fourteen and sixteen who meets the requirements for the completion of the sixth grade of the public school as established by said board and who holds a permit for employment in private domestic service or service on a farm, under section eighty-six of chapter one hundred and forty-nine, and is regularly employed thereunder for at least six hours per day, or a child between fourteen and sixteen who meets said requirements and has the written permission of the superintendent of schools of the town where he resides to engage in non-wage-earning employment at home, or a child over fourteen who holds a permit for employment in a cooperating employment, as provided in said section eighty-six, shall, subject to section fifteen, attend a public day school in said town, or some other day school approved by the school committee, during the number of days required by the board of education in each school year, unless the child attends school in another town, for said number of days, under sections six to twelve, inclusive, or attends an experimental school project established under an experimental school plan, as provided in section one G of chapter fifteen, but such attendance shall not be required of a child whose physical or mental condition is such as to render attendance inexpedient or impracticable subject to the provisions of section three of chapter seventy-one B or of a child granted an employment permit by the superintendent of schools when such superintendent determines that the welfare of such child will be better served through the granting of such permit, or of a child who is being otherwise instructed in a manner approved in advance by the superintendent or the school committee."

⁶ Montana: requires that a child shall remain in school until the latter of either the child's 16th birthday or the date of completion of the work of the eighth grade.

⁷ New Hampshire: The superintendent, may grant waivers 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. This law takes effect July 1st, 2009.

⁸ New York: Both New York City and Buffalo require minors to attend school from the age of 6 until the age of 17. Each district in the state is authorized to require minors between 16 and 17 who are not employed to attend school. The board of education of the Syracuse city school district is authorized to require minors who are five years of age on or before December first to attend kindergarten instruction.

⁹ South Carolina: In South Carolina, kindergarten is mandatory. However, state statutes permit parental waiver for kindergarten at age five.

¹⁰ Tennessee: "A parent or guardian who believes that such parent's or guardian's child is not ready to attend school at the designated age of mandatory attendance may make application to the principal of the public school which the child would attend for a one semester or one year deferral in required attendance."

¹¹ Texas: School districts may require persons who voluntarily enroll in school or voluntarily attend school after their 18th birthday to attend school until the end of the school year.

¹² Virginia: "For a student who is at least 16 years of age, there shall be a meeting of the student, the student's parents, and the principal or his designee of the school in which the student is enrolled in which an individual student alternative education plan shall be developed in conformity with guidelines prescribed by the Board..."

Part II: Statutory Excerpts

Alabama – "Every child between the ages of **7** and **16**"

Alaska – "Every child between **7** and **16** years of age"

American Samoa – ". . . the age of **six** through **eighteen**"

Arizona – "Every child between the ages of **6** and **16** years . . ." or ". . . has completed the high school course of study necessary for completion of grade ten as prescribed by the State Board of Education . . ."

Arkansas – ". . . age **5** through **17** years on or before September 15th of that year...."

California – "Each person between the ages of **6** and **18**"

Colorado – "Every child who has attained the age of **6** years on or before August 1st of each year and is under the age of **17** years"

Connecticut – ". . . a child **five** years of age and over and under **eighteen** years of age"

Delaware – ". . . a child between **5** years of age and **16** years of age"

District of Columbia – ". . . a minor who has reached the age of **5** years or will become **5** years of age on or before December 31st of the current school year . . . until the minor reaches the age of **18** years."

Florida – "All children who have attained the age of **6** years or who will have attained the age of **6** years by February 1 of any school year or who are older than **6** years of age but who have not attained the age of **16** years"

Georgia – ". . . between their **sixth** and **sixteenth** birthdays"

Hawaii – ". . . all children who will have arrived at the age of **6** years, and who will not have arrived at the age of **18** years, by January 1 of any school year"

Idaho – ". . . any child resident in this state who has attained the age of **7** years at the time of commencement of school in his district, but **not the age of 16** years"

Illinois - ". . . any child between the ages of **7** and **17** years"

Indiana – ". . . the individual becomes **7** years of age until . . . reaches at least **16** years of age but who is less than **18** years of age and the requirements under subsection (j) concerning an exit interview are met enabling the individual to withdraw from school before graduation; or . . . the individual reaches at least **18** years of age"

Iowa – "A child who has reached the age of **6** and is under **16** years of age by September 15"

Kansas – ". . . any child who has reached the age of **7** years and is under the age of **18** years"

Kentucky – "... any child between the ages of **6** and **16** ... A child's age is between **6** and **16** when the child has reached his 6th birthday and has not passed his 16th birthday. ..."

Louisiana – "... from that child's **seventh** birthday until his **eighteenth** birthday. ..."

Maine – "Persons ... who are at **7** and under **17** years of age. ..."

Maryland – "... each child who ... is **5** years old or older and under **16** ..."

Massachusetts – "Each child must attend school beginning in September of the calendar year in which he or she attains the age of **six**." (Language for the maximum age found in MASS. GEN. LAWS ANN. 76 § 1.)

Michigan – "... a child from the age of **6** to the child's **16th** birthday. ..."

Minnesota – "... every child between **7** and **16** years of age...A parent may withdraw a child under the age of 7 from enrollment at any time."

Mississippi – "... a child who has attained or will attain the age of **6** years on or before September 1 of the calendar year and who has not attained the age of **17** years on or before September 1 of the calendar year...and any child who has attained or will attain the age of 5 years on or before September 1st and has enrolled in a full-day public school program."

Missouri – "... a child between the ages of **7** and the compulsory attendance age for the district...Any parent, guardian or other person who enrolls a child between the ages of 5-7 years in a public school program of academic instruction shall cause such a child to attend the academic program on a regular basis." The school board of a metropolitan school district "...may adopt a resolution to establish a compulsory attendance age of **17** to take effect no later than the school year next following the school year during which the resolution is adopted." In all other cases, compulsory attendance shall mean "Seventeen years of age or having successfully completed sixteen credits towards high school graduation. The school board of a metropolitan school district for which the compulsory attendance age is 17 years may adopt a resolution to lower the compulsory attendance age to sixteen years; provided that such resolution shall take effect no earlier than the school year next following the school year during which the resolution is adopted. "

Montana – "... any child who is **7** years of age or older prior to the first day of school in any school fiscal year ... until ... the child's **16th** birthday. ..."

Nebraska – "... a child is of mandatory attendance age if the child (i) will reach **six** years of age prior to January 1 of the then-current school year. ...and (iii) **has not reached eighteen** years of age."

Nevada – "... any child between the ages of **7** and **18** years..."

New Hampshire – "... any child at least **6** years of age and under **18** years of age. ..."

New Jersey – "... a child between the ages of **6** and **16** years. ..."

New Mexico – "... is at least five years of age prior to 12:01 a.m. on September 1 of the school year; ... until the school age-person is at least 18 years of age unless that person has graduated from high school or received a general educational development certificate."

New York – "... each minor from **6** to **16** years of age. ..."

North Carolina – "... a child between the ages of **7** and **16** years. ..."

North Dakota – "... child of an age of **7** years to **16** years. ...and if a person enrolls a child of age 6 in a public school, the person shall ensure that the child is in attendance for the entire school year."

Ohio – "A child between **6** and **18** years of age is 'of compulsory age'..."

Oklahoma – "... a child who is over the age of **5** years, and under the age of **18** years"

Oregon – "... all children between the ages of **7** and **18** years who has not completed the 12th grade. . ."

Pennsylvania – "... not be later than at the age of **8** years, until the age of **17** years."

Puerto Rico – "... all children between the ages of five (**5**) and eighteen (**18**)"

Rhode Island – "Every child who has completed or will have completed **6** years of life on or before September 1st of any school year and has not completed **16** years of life"

South Carolina – "... the child or ward is **5** years of age before September first until the child or ward attains his **17th** birthday"

South Dakota – "... a child who is **6** years old by the first day of September and who has not exceeded the age of **18**..."

Tennessee – "... any child or children between **six** years of age and **seventeen** years of age. . . ."

Texas – "... a child who is at least **6** years of age . . . and who has completed the academic year in which the child's **18th** birthday occurred"

Utah – "... a minor between **6** and **18** years of age"

Vermont – "... a child between the ages of **six** and **16** years . . ." or "... has completed tenth grade . . . " or "... is excused by the superintendent or a majority of the school directors"

Virgin Islands – "All children shall commence their school education . . . in the calendar year in which they reach their **5th** birthday . . . until the expiration of the school year nearest their **16th** birthday"

Virginia – "... any child who will have reached the **fifth** birthday on or before September 30 of any school year and who has not passed the **eighteenth** birthday"

Washington – "... any child **8** years of age and under **18** years of age"

West Virginia – "Compulsory school attendance shall begin with the school year in which the **6th** birthday is reached prior to the first day of September of such year . . . and continue to the **16th** birthday."

Wisconsin – "... a child who is between the ages of **6** and **18** years old"

Wyoming – "... a child . . . whose **7th** birthday falls on or before September 15 of any year and who has not attained his **16th** birthday . . ." or "... completed the tenth grade"

Recent updates to this ECS StateNote have been made by Melodye Bush, Kyle Zinth, and Michael Colasanti.

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Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas



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Employment Related Provisions in State Compulsory School Attendance Laws - January 1, 2009

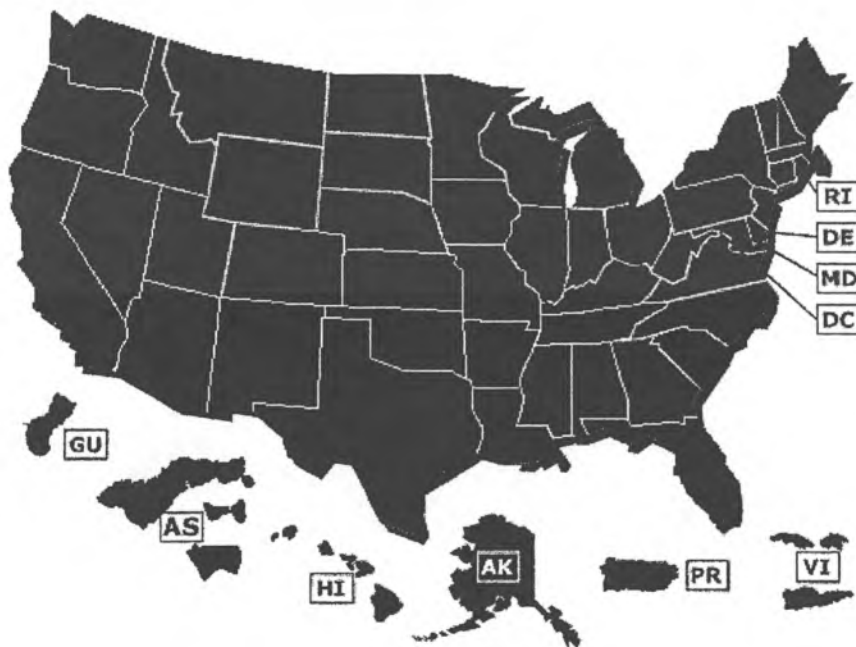


Table of Employment Related Provisions in State Compulsory School Attendance Laws By State

State	Age of Required School Attendance		Exemptions <u>1</u> / Employed		High School Graduate
	from	to	Age	Completion of Grade	
Alabama	7	16	legally and regularly employed under child labor law.	---	X
	3	21	permitted for special education students.		
Alaska	7	16	---	---	X
			14 with parental		

Arizona	6	16	consent and gainfully employed.	---	---
Arkansas	5	17 must complete school year.	---	---	X
California	6	18	---	---	X
Colorado	7	16	has current age and school certificate or work permit.	---	X
Connecticut	5	18	16 with parental consent.	---	---
Delaware	5	16	---	---	---
District of Columbia	5	18	children who are age 5 by September 30 are required to be enrolled in kindergarten.	---	---
Florida	6	17	may terminate attended at 16 with parental consent.	---	---
Georgia	6	16	---	---	X
Hawaii	6	18	15	---	X
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 was issued.	---	X
Iowa	6	16	---	---	X
Kansas	7	18	17 or 16 with parental consent.	---	---
Kentucky	6	16	---	---	X
Louisiana	7	18 or 17 with parental consent.	---	---	X
Maine	7	17	15 or	9	X
Maryland	5	16	---	---	---
Massachusetts	6	16	14	---	---
Michigan	6	16	---	---	---
Minnesota	7	16	---	---	X

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 ---	X
Nevada	7	upper age limit has been changed to 18 unless the child has graduated from high school.	14 and excused by board of trustees. 14 if work is necessary for own or parents' support.	8 ---	X
New Hampshire	6	16 presently; however, effective July 2009, upper age limit will change to 18 or the student must have received diploma or qualifies for exception. With passage of NH House Bill 927, all districts are making plans to offer kindergarten.	---	---	---
New Jersey	6	16	---	---	---
New Mexico	5, or 8 if parents and school board agree	effective July 1, 2007, neither school districts or state chartered school districts shall excuse a student from attending school except as provided by law or for parent-authorized medical reasons.	---	---	X
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.	---	---	X
North Carolina	7	16	---	---	---
North Dakota	7	16	necessary to support of family.	---	X

Ohio	6	18	16 with parents' and superintendents permission.	---	X
Oklahoma	5	18 or 16 if excused by written joint agreement.	---	---	X
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	---	X
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.	---	X
Rhode Island <u>2</u>	6	18	16 with written parental consent. Dropout Prevention Act of 2007.	---	---
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.	X
South Dakota	6	16 or completion of 8th grade if member of certain religious organizations. effective July 1, 2009, the upper limit of the compulsory age law changes to	---	---	---

		18.			
Tennessee	6	18th birthday.	---	local exemptions at 17th birthday for discipline problems.	X
Texas	6	18; person 18 years of age may enroll but failure to attend can result in permanent revocation if 5 or more unexcused absences occur in a semester. Students suspected of violating school attendance laws when apprehended must be taken into custody and delivered to their school campus.	---	---	---
Utah	6	18	16 and 8th grade completed. home schooled minors has exempt from attendance.	8th for employment purposes.	X
Vermont	6	16	15 and completed 6th grade and services needed for support of family.	---	---
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.	---	X
Washington	8	18 16 and parent agrees that child should not be required to attend, or child is emancipated, or child has received certificate of competence.	16	---	X and age 16
West Virginia	6	16	---	---	X
Wisconsin	6	18	---	---	X

Wyoming	7	16	---	---	---
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1 Nearly 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.

2 The Dropout Prevention Act is a comprehensive program to have all the schools within the state make an attempt to keep students in school. There were no changes to the age limits for school attendance, but the establishment of a state-wide program is a major effort to prevent students from leaving school early - for any reason.

Prepared By:

**Office of Performance, Budget, and Departmental Liaison
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High School Dropout: A Quick Stats Fact Sheet

By Maggie Monrad, National High School Center at AIR

Each year almost one-third of public high school students fail to graduate from high school.¹ The high school dropout problem is a crisis for the United States, in part because it impacts not only individuals and their education, but also because the economic and social costs are so dramatic. Globally, the United States ranks seventeenth in high school graduation rates and fourteenth in college graduation rates among developed nations.² Domestically, the nation and its communities suffer from a lack of productive workers and higher costs associated with incarceration, health care, and other social services.³ As the 21st century United States moves towards an increasingly global economy, more individuals are discovering that higher levels of education are critical to their own and their nation's ability to compete and thrive – in fact, about 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs will require some postsecondary education.⁴ Understanding the magnitude of the dropout problem and the forces that impact dropout rates is critically important to developing dropout prevention strategies.

Who drops out?

- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings' testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education estimated that approximately one million students drop out every year.⁵
- High school dropouts are more likely to be unemployed, earn lower wages, have higher rates of public assistance, are more likely to be single parents, and have children at a younger age.⁶
- Every school day 7,000 U.S. students leave high school never to return.⁷ In 2004, approximately 3.8 million 16- through 24- year olds were not enrolled in high school and had not earned a high school diploma or alternative credential, such as a GED.⁸
- Based on calculations per school day (180 days of school, seven hours each day), one high school student drops out every nine seconds.⁹
- The dropout rate for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities is approximately twice that of general education students.¹⁰
- Research has confirmed that the lowest-performing readers are most at risk of dropping out of high school. Those achieving in the lowest quartile are 3.5 times more likely to drop out than students in the next highest quarter of academic achievement, and 20 times more likely to drop out than top-performing students.¹¹

Race/Ethnicity/Socioeconomic Status

- Male students are consistently eight percent less likely to graduate than female students, and the gap is as large as 14 percent between male and female African-American students.¹²

- Among minorities, only about 52 percent of Hispanic students and 56 percent of African-American students will graduate in four years, compared with 78 percent of white students.¹³
- High school students from low-income families (the lowest 20 percent) were six times more likely to drop out than students from higher income families. Ultimately, about one half of all dropouts never receive a high school credential.¹⁴

Students with Disabilities Aged 14 and Older Who Dropped Out, by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Group who Dropped Out
American Indian/Alaska Native	52.2%
Black	44.5%
Hispanic	43.5%
White	33.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	28.0%

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS), 2003. These data are for the 50 states, DC, Puerto Rico and the four outlying areas. This is based on a cumulative 12-month count.

Impact: Crime

- Estimates indicate that approximately 30 percent of federal inmates, 40 percent of state prison inmates, and 50 percent of persons on death row are high school non-completers. Moreover, non-completers are 3.5 times more likely than high school completers to be imprisoned at some point during their lifetime.¹⁵
- Raising the high school completion rate one percent for all men ages 20- through 60- would save the US \$1.4 billion annually in crime related costs.¹⁶ Each class of high school dropouts costs the U.S. economy more than \$8 billion in incarceration expenses and lost wages *per year*.¹⁷ If the male graduation rate was increased by only five percent, the U.S. could save \$7.7 billion a year through reducing crime related costs and increasing earnings.¹⁸

Impact: Economy

- A single 18-year-old dropout earns \$260,000 less over a lifetime and contributes \$60,000 less in federal and state income taxes. Combined income and tax losses for one cohort of 18-year-olds who drop out is \$192 billion which is 1.6 percent of the GDP.¹⁹ America loses more than \$26 billion in federal and state income taxes each year from the 23 million high school dropouts aged 18 to 67.²⁰

- Almost 1.3 million students didn't graduate from US high schools in 2004, costing more than \$325 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over their lifetimes.²¹ The Alliance for Excellent Education has estimated that the more than 12 millions students who will drop out over the next decade will cost the nation \$3 trillion dollars.²²

Unemployment and Earnings for Full-time Wage and Salary Workers Age 25 and Over, by Educational Attainment

Unemployment Rate in 2005 (Percent)	Education Attained	Median Weekly Earnings in 2005 (Dollars)
1.6	Doctoral degree	\$1,421
1.1	Professional degree	1,370
2.1	Master's degree	1,129
2.6	Bachelor's degree	937
3.3	Associate degree	699
4.2	Some college, no degree	653
4.7	High-school graduate	583
7.6	Some high-school, no diploma	409

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor. (2006, May). *Occupational employment and wages, May 2005*. Washington: Author. Retrieved April 20, 2007, from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.toc.htm>

Impact: Personal Income and Employment

- A male high school graduate who works until age 65 will earn, on average, nearly \$333,000 more than a dropout; a worker with some college will earn \$538,000 more. According to a recent report published by Teachers College at Columbia University, male high school graduates earn up to \$322,000 more over the course of their lifetimes than dropouts, while college graduates earn up to \$1.3 million more.²³ In total, there is more than \$309 billion lost wages over the students' lifetimes.²⁴
- In 1964, a high school dropout earned 64 cents for every dollar earned by an individual with at least a high school degree. In 2004, the high school dropout earned only 37 cents for each dollar earned by an individual with more education.²⁵
- The median income of high school dropouts aged 18 and over was \$12,184 in 2003. By comparison, the median income of those aged 18 and over who completed their education with a high school credential (including GED) was \$20,431.²⁶

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THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

Law urged to make teens stay in school

The Boston Globe

By James Vaznis, Globe Staff | October 21, 2009

Massachusetts students would be required to stay in school until age 18 under an ambitious proposal, part of a broader effort to halve the state's high school dropout rate, to be announced today by a special state commission.

With approximately 10,000 Massachusetts students quitting school each year, some as young as 14 years old, commission members say the state can no longer afford to ignore the dropout crisis, especially when striving to develop a more highly educated and skilled workforce.

For more than a decade, the state's dropout rate has remained stagnant. According to the most recent data available, 3.4 percent of students statewide quit school during the 2007-08 academic year, while several urban districts have rates nearly triple that. Under current state law, students can legally drop out by choice at age 16, and students as young as 14 can withdraw from school with permission from the superintendent for medical reasons, employment, or to do nonwage work at home.

If these dropouts never return to receive a diploma, they can become a huge drain on the state's economy. They are less likely to have a job and are far more likely to go to jail or depend on public assistance than residents who have graduated from high school, according to the commission's report, which is being released this afternoon.

"This whole report is a call to action," said Paul Reville, the secretary of education and chairman of the commission, which was created under a 2008 law to develop dropout prevention strategies. "It's critical work. We can ill afford the waste, loss, and tragedy these persistent rates represent."

In the coming months, the Patrick administration plans to put together legislation to raise the compulsory school age, a measure that will be tied to creation of an array of programs aimed at preventing students from dropping out and reaching out to those who have. By April this year, 19 states required students to stay in school until 18, according to the Education Commission of the States. The group includes New Hampshire, where the change took effect this year.

Some strategies recommended by the commission include hiring case managers to make the school experience more personal for these students, creating internships so students clearly see the connection between the classroom and potential careers, and using standardized test scores and other data to gauge, as early as elementary school, whether a student runs the risk of not finishing high school.

Given the state's dire budget predicament, Reville said, gaining the funding needed to push the effort forward could be a challenge. Already, sluggish state revenues have forced a sharp reduction in funding for dropout prevention this year.

But Reville emphasized that fighting for these students is worthwhile. "We are not going to hold back because of a budget crisis and say this problem doesn't exist," he said.

While the commission did not put a pricetag on its proposals, the report pointed out that overall enrollment in alternative education programs at local high schools would more than double, from 4,500 to 12,000, as more students stay in school.

Some members of the Legislature have expressed skepticism in the past about raising the age of school leaving, worried about the cost associated with creating programs for these students or further exacerbating problems that many districts already have with truancy. Those concerns led to passage of the bill that created the commission.

But others in the Legislature strongly support raising the attendance age. Representative Garrett Bradley, Democrat of Hingham, has already filed a bill to raise the maximum attendance age, which will be the subject of a hearing next month.

Reville said he has not examined that legislation yet, but anticipates that it will need to be reworked to encapsulate all the panel's recommendations.

Representative Martha M. Walz, a Boston Democrat who cochairs the Joint Committee on Education, has not yet taken a position on Bradley's bill, but said she was encouraged that the commission had given the age change a favorable recommendation and had suggested other programs and resources that could help these students succeed in school.

"My gut instinct tells me keeping students in school until age 18 is the right way to go if we can address underlying reasons that cause them to drop out and create programs that address their need," Walz said.

Students drop out of school for a wide array of reasons. Some grow frustrated because of consistently poor academic performance in school, particularly those not fluent in English and those who require special education, according to the report. Other students say they don't have time for school because they need to help their families earn income.

The commission also found that some students said they did not stick with school simply because no one seemed to care whether they did.

Compared with the national average, Massachusetts loses a smaller share of students. According to the most recent federal data available, from 2007, the national high school dropout average was 8.7 percent.

But rates in several Massachusetts urban districts often exceed or hover around the national average. In the 2007-08 school year, Lawrence lost 12.9 percent of its students; Fall River, 12.5 percent; Holyoke, 11.6 percent; Springfield, 9.7 percent; and Boston, 7.6 percent.

Reducing dropout rates is one part of the state's strategy to boost the state's high school graduation rate, which for the class of 2008 stood at about 81 percent. Dropouts accounted for about half of the students who did not earn a diploma in four years, while most of the others in that group opted for a fifth year of school.

Each dropout, over his or her lifetime, costs more than \$118,000 in government expenditure and other benefits, according to research conducted a few years ago by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies.

Some districts are already working on reducing dropout rates. Boston opened a "re-engagement center" last month where high school dropouts can receive extra support as they resume their quest for a diploma.

Thomas Scott, executive of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, said that decreasing the dropout rate is a good goal, but that the state needs to put money behind the policy. "You have to invest in this population for them to stay in school," said Scott. ■