

Sobering Facts Regarding the Dropout Crisis

- “Nearly 80% of the nation’s high schools that produce the highest number of dropouts can be found in just 15 states (Arizona, California, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas).”
- “More than half of African American students in Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania attend high schools in which the majority of students do not graduate on time, if at all. African American students in these states are up to 10 times more likely to attend a high school with very weak promoting power*, high dropout and low graduation rates than white students.”
- “More than two-thirds of the high schools with the lowest promoting power (50% or less) are located in just 11 states (Georgia, Florida, Texas, South Carolina, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and California).
- “More than one quarter (28%) of the high schools with the worst promoting power is located in five northern industrial states (Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New York). These high schools are located almost entirely (89%) in the large and medium-sized cities of these states, and are overwhelmingly attended by minority students.”
- “Policymakers and education decision makers are now realizing that support for pre-schoolers and elementary school students must be sustained through the secondary grades to keep achievement and attainment gains from fading as students face the academic and social challenges of their middle and high school years.”
- “This study located the nation’s dropout crises in approximately 2,000 high schools. These high schools are found in nearly every state, but are concentrated in northern and some western cities, southern and southwestern states and three mega-districts – New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Currently, close to one in five students attends a high school with weak promoting power. Among minorities, the rate approaches one in two. There are cities and rural counties where students have virtually no choice but to attend a public high school in which graduation is not the norm.”
- “Increased personalization and student outreach, high standards, intensive instructional programs to close achievement gaps, improved teacher quality, professional development, and teacher supports, engaging school programs, and strengthened connections between high schools and colleges and employers are all needed in large, sustained, and coordinated measures. To date, however, this has rarely occurred because schools and districts have lacked the energy, know-how, and resources to do all that is needed. Instead districts and schools focus on one two areas of needed reform and then become disappointed and frustrated when the results are not sufficient.”

* promoting power = comparison of the number of freshman at a high school to the number of seniors four years later

Source: *Locating the Dropout Crisis: Which High Schools Produce the Nation’s Dropouts? Where Are They Located? Who Attends Them?*, R. Balfanz and N. Legters, Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, June 2004