

The Dropout Epidemic

1 in 3 Students Never Graduate, According to a New Study

Friday, April 14, 2006



April 10, 2006 — America's children are leaving school in higher numbers than most people realize, according to a report in Time magazine. The issue's cover story reports that one in three American students leave high school before graduating.

Minority communities are hit particularly hard by the problem. Nearly half of African-American children and more than half of Hispanic children never graduate from high school. It also appears that despite the federal government's contention that the dropout rate is less than 10 percent; the dropout rate of one-third goes back at least 20 years.

"Even though we say education is important to us, we actually don't have very good data on what is working and what isn't," said Nathan Thornburgh, the author of the Time article. "For decades, schools and the federal government said we had graduation rates that were up in the 90s. Some places even claimed near-perfect graduation rates. But starting in 2001, researchers started peeling back the layers."

Talk-show host and media mogul Oprah Winfrey and Microsoft chairman and chief software architect Bill Gates and his wife, Melinda, are tackling the problem. Winfrey will feature the issue on her program on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The Gates Foundation calls dropping out a "silent epidemic" because of the strong correlation between leaving school without earning a diploma and other problems later on in life.

For example, 67 percent of prison inmates nationwide are high school dropouts, and half of all dropouts' ages 16 to 24 are unemployed. Four out of 10 young adults who don't graduate get some type of government assistance.

Moreover, high school graduates on average make \$9,200 more each year than high school dropouts. Over the course of their lifetimes, college graduates make more than \$1 million more than classmates who don't finish high school.

1. Do you find these statistics pertaining to student dropout rates surprising? Is this anything new? Explain.
2. Assuming there were 692 prisoners incarcerated in a particular institution, according to the article, approximately how many of them statistically are probably high school dropouts?
3. If there are currently 114,000,000 (estimate) students currently enrolled in America's schools, about how many are projected to not complete high school?
4. Over a 40-year duration, how much more can a college graduate anticipate earning compared to a high school dropout?
5. What preventive measures would you recommend the nation implement to fix this problem?
6. In the passage above, in paragraph form, explain at least seven ways using the "**Reading Across The Curriculum**" poster simplifies understanding of the material. Be specific.
7. In paragraph form, list at least five ways using guidelines from the "**Writing Guidelines**" will make you a stronger and more convincing writer; specifically, on The Daughtry Times.
8. Using contextual clues only, explain the meaning of the italicized word: *correlation*.
9. In paragraph form, explain five legitimate and educational purposes behind The Daughtry Times.