



Diplomas Now: Improving Graduation Rates



Bob Balfanz, dropout expert (DiplomasNow.org)

The numbers are rather frightening, as reported by Diplomas Now:

“...half of the 1,000,000 kids who drop out of school every year come from just 12 percent of the nation’s high schools — or 1,700 dropout factories.”

The Alliance for Excellent Education, in partnership with State Farm Insurance, published this concise but eye-opening report on the economic benefits to improving the high school graduation rates in metros around the country.

Beyond the personal tragedy of lost potential and life satisfaction for those half-million students, the economic and societal impact is staggering. Adults without a high school diploma earn significantly less in a lifetime than graduates do, and they’re more likely to experience unemployment and need public assistance.

While no school wants the dropout factory moniker, these graduation numbers don’t lie. Of course, the reasons for students dropping out early are not solely school-related. But when they are prime contributors, Diplomas Now offers a successful road map for reversing the dropout trend.

Early Warning Indicators

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University led by professor Bob Balfanz, the nation's leading dropout expert, have identified early warning indicators that can help educators zero in on students likely to fail. Sometimes known as the ABC's, the three primary indicators are attendance, behavior and coursework, especially in English and Math.

Diplomas Now has developed a systemic application of that research, ensuring support to place off-track-for-graduation students back on the right path. Watch how it works here.

The non-profit coordinates multiple resources to improve student performance before it's too late. Starting in the middle school, they organize school-based academic and social services along with home support as needed.

After proving successful in Philadelphia and New Orleans, the program has been expanded to 20 schools in 10 cities. Diplomas Now has plans to expand by two more cities, and 60 more schools, within the next five years. Something is working well.