



2010 Agenda

FAIR OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY CHILD

FACT SHEET: Graduation Rate

All young people need a strong education to succeed in today's economy, and graduating from high school is more crucial than ever before. High school graduates in Kentucky on average earn \$6,821 more each year than high school dropouts. Despite the fact that high school graduation greatly increases a young person's chance at a bright future, only 85% of Kentucky's students graduate from high school, and Kentucky allows students to legally drop out of school at age 16.

FACTS:

Kentucky's law regarding the compulsory attendance age is outdated. The current law allowing students to leave high school at the age of 16 was put into place more than 100 years ago. At that time, a high school diploma was not required for most mainstream jobs. Today, nearly six in ten jobs in the U.S. are held by workers with some college education

Failure to graduate from high school has long-term financial consequences for the individual and for society. People who drop out of high school earn much less than those with diplomas, and are far more likely to rely on public assistance. As a result of their lower incomes, those without a high school degree contribute much less in income and sales taxes. Based on the 2007 income tax rates, Kentuckians who dropped out of high school pay \$396 less in taxes per year than a high school graduate, resulting in a loss of \$2.9 million in state income tax revenue in a single year. On top of those losses, Kentucky spends \$2,113 more on support programs for dropouts than for high school graduates. Kentucky would benefit by approximately \$671,898 over the lifetime of each additional graduate in the form of increased earning, economic growth, and cost avoidance.

Low graduation rates have consequences for public safety. Young people who have dropped out of high school are predominantly from low-income families, have high rates of unemployment, and low wages if employed. These economic pressures put them at much greater risk of incarceration than those with a high school degree. Nearly 1 in 10 males ages 16-24 years old who dropped out of high school were incarcerated in 2006-2007 across the nation.

SOLUTIONS:

- Require students to stay in school until age 18
- Offer opportunities in all high schools for students to combine part-day schooling with employment
- Ensure that all high schools offer their students access to early college credits through dual enrollment courses in either 4-year colleges or technical and community colleges

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