

NEA: National Education Association

Great Public Schools for Every Child

Nation's Educators Sound the Alarm on School Dropout Crisis

NEA's Plan for Reducing School Dropouts

NEA and its 3.2 million members believe every child in America should attend a great public school. It is a basic right of every American. The mission of NEA is to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education that prepares every student to succeed in a global society.

We also believe that providing great public schools for every child is the shared responsibility of NEA and its 3.2 million members/educators, as well as parents, families, communities, businesses, and government at the national, state, and local levels.

NEA has developed 12 action steps to address the nation's school dropout crisis. While there are many ways to address this problem, NEA has chosen steps that are the most promising based on a wide range of experience and data.

NEA's 12 Dropout Action Steps:

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.

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