

High School Drop-out Rate

In God's plan, every man is born to seek self-fulfillment, for every human life is called to some task by God. At birth a human being possesses certain aptitudes and abilities in germinal form, and these qualities are to be cultivated so that they may bear fruit. By developing these traits through formal education of personal effort, the individual works his way toward the goal set for him by the Creator. (*Pope Paul VI, On the Development of Peoples*)

Church teaching

- ★ Children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy. (*Pope Paul VI, Declaration on Christian Education*)
- ★ Our nation was conceived as a place wherein all people could exercise their basic human rights in an atmosphere of freedom. Among these rights is equal access to educational opportunities and resources so that each person can fully develop his or her potential. (*Educational Opportunity for All, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops*)
- ★ Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance. It is designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. Between pupils of different talents and backgrounds it promotes friendly relations and fosters a spirit of mutual understanding; and it establishes as it were a center whose work and progress must be shared together by families, teachers, associations of various types that foster cultural, civic, and religious life, as well as by civil society and the entire human community. (*Pope Paul VI, Declaration on Christian Education*)

Resources

- ★ **Texas Catholic Conference** Education page (www.TXcatholic.org/ed.asp)
- ★ **National Catholic Education Association (NCEA)** The NCEA provides leadership and service to American Catholic Educators (www.NCEA.org)
- ★ **Dropout Prevention** Texas Education Agency (TEA) (www.tea.state.tx.us/dpchse/research.html)
- ★ **National Dropout Prevention Center/Network** (www.DropoutPrevention.org)

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Education is a basic human right. High School drop-outs are more likely to have low-wage jobs, engage in high risk activities, and use welfare and other social programs throughout their lives. The Texas Catholic Conference supports efforts to reduce high school drop-out rates to ensure that all students are able to live successful lives in keeping with their human dignity.

Drop Out Risksⁱ

- As the pool of dropouts continues to grow, employment opportunities for them are more limited, because today's economy requires of the labor force increased literacy, more education, enhanced technological skills, and lifelong learning.
- The rate of engagement in high-risk behaviors such as premature sexual activity, early pregnancy, delinquency, crime, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide has been found to be significantly higher among dropouts.
- Dropouts are more likely than other citizens to draw on welfare and other social programs throughout their lives.
- Income differences between dropouts and other citizens can be expected to widen as the economy evolves, "pitting Americans with less education against computerized machines and people in low-wage nations."
- A growth of unskilled laborers in low-wage jobs will increase the trend toward developing a large American underclass which "some analysts argue...threatens the continuing existence of a democratic way of life."
- As summarized by the General Accounting Office (1987), the social costs of the dropout problem include an underskilled labor force, lower productivity, lost taxes, and increased public assistance and crime.

Facts on Graduation Rates in Texasⁱⁱ

- More than 119,000 Texas students in the class of 2005 failed to graduate from high school. The state's overall graduation rate is about 67 percent. Only Mississippi has a higher percentage of its adult population lacking a high school diploma.
- The annual public costs associated with just one year's class of dropouts is \$377 million, or about \$3,168 per dropout. Over an expected lifetime of 50 years, one year's class of dropouts will cost Texas taxpayers \$19 billion.
- If all of Texas's residents of working age had obtained at least a high school diploma, total earnings in Texas in 2005 would have been \$24 billion higher. The lower earnings of Texas's working-age dropouts result in state sales tax revenues \$827 million lower than they would be if all residents had attained a least a high school diploma.
- Dropouts are much more likely to receive or to have a child who receives Medicaid benefits, and more likely to be incarcerated than are those with higher levels of educational attainment.

ⁱ Woods, E. Gregory. "Reducing the Dropout Rate." School Improvement Research Series, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Mar. 1995. <<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/9/c017.html>>.

ⁱⁱ "The High Cost of Failing to Reform Public Education in Texas" by Friedman Foundation Senior Fellow Brian Gottlob. 2007.