



Quick Facts About Dropouts

- Mississippi's goal is to cut the dropout rate in half by 2013.
- The state's current dropout rate is 15.9 percent.
- Imagine a school bus full of students – that's about how many Mississippi students drop out, on average, each school day.
- Approximately 10,000 students drop out of Mississippi schools each year.
- The cost of dropouts to our state is \$458 million annually.

What is the economic and social impact when students drop out of school?

- Studies show that dropouts are more than twice as likely as high school graduates to slip into poverty in any given year.
- Approximately 168,000 high school dropouts are on Medicaid in Mississippi, costing the state more than \$208 million annually.
- If the male high school graduation rate increased just 5%, the reduced crime rate and increased earnings would give Mississippi a combined savings and revenue of more than \$93 million annually.
- School dropouts are more likely than graduates to go to jail. Past studies have shown that high school dropouts account for 75% of inmates in state prisons, 59% of federal prisoners and 69% of local jail inmates.
- Overall, high school dropouts cost the state of Mississippi more than \$458 million annually in lost revenue and added public assistance and incarceration costs.

What are the solutions?

Each school district in the state has its own dropout prevention plan and a team dedicated to implementing the plan. The dropout prevention team is designed to work as a school-community partnership and includes school personnel as well as representatives from local businesses, faith-based organizations and the community at large.

Although there is no single solution to the dropout problem, there are some proven strategies that can make a positive impact:

- Early childhood education. Starting kindergarten ready to learn is the best way to set students on a path to graduation. Students who start out behind typically stay behind. More students are retained in kindergarten and first grade than at any other time.
- Parental involvement. When parents monitor their children's grades and communicate with their teachers and schools, students attend school more regularly and perform better academically.
- High quality teachers and classroom instruction that makes learning relevant.

- Successful transitions. Giving extra support to students during key transition points (elementary to middle school, middle school to high school) can help them adjust to changes and make a positive start in their new environment.
- Opportunities for real-world learning, such as internships, job shadowing and service learning. Exposure to the workplace helps students understand the role of work in adult life and encourages them to explore future employment possibilities.
- Relationships with caring adults. Having a mentor helps at-risk students feel valued and motivated to stay in school. A mentor who contributes even a small amount of time can have a significant impact on an individual child.

Who can address the problem?

Schools can't do it alone. We need parents, businesses, non-profit and faith-based groups, churches and community leaders to **get on the bus** and help students **stay on the bus** toward graduation.

Some current school-community initiatives include:

- A mentoring and tutoring program pairs at-risk seventh graders with high school juniors and seniors. The older students are paid as a part-time job (through a business donation) to help younger students with school work and to serve as role models.
- One organization provides community and faith-based outreach to at-risk students by recruiting former teachers to offer tutoring services and members of participating churches to serve as mentors. Students meet weekly with tutors and mentors.
- A middle school hosted an official eighth grade pledge ceremony in which students made a public commitment to graduate in the Class of 2012. Families, friends and other students watched as a caring adult escorted each eighth grader to sign the pledge. Each student received a necklace with the inscription PLEDGE 2012.
- One large company identified the 10 school districts in which most of its employees live and gave dropout prevention grants to those schools.
- A high school hosted a 'Reality Fair' during school hours, with participation by local businesses. Students were assigned a salary based on a fictitious educational level and then used their "paycheck" to pay taxes, buy food and other essentials, pay their rent or mortgage and utility bills, and purchase cell phones, clothes and other items.
- One company promotes the importance of afterschool programs by sponsoring an annual event highlighting the need for afterschool programs and the positive results achieved by youth who spend afterschool hours in constructive, organized activities.

To learn more, visit www.onthebus.ms. There, you'll find guidance and resources designed for parents, community leaders, faith-based organizations, businesses and others who are interested in getting **On the Bus** to help keep students in school.

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