

# CREATING A REAL TIME DATA SYSTEM FOR REDUCING DROP OUT RATES IN THE US

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"In order to truly understand what makes a child drop out of school, we have to look deeper."




A recent study entitled *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic* was released by the Everyone Graduates at Johns Hopkins University School of Education and Civic Enterprises, in partnership with America's Promise, and the Alliance for Excellent Education.

It is an excellent study with a lot of statistics, tables, and facts. The reason for the study was to examine the greatest reasons that high school students drop out of school. The study identified 5 drivers for dropping out of school.

Naturally, these were the same 5 drivers that have been listed over and over again. The drivers indicated that students from a low income community, were minorities, had disabilities, were from a big city, and lived in a highly populated state were more likely to drop out of school. And what does this tell us? That we have not identified the real reason yet of why children drop out of school. When





# ***“SO WHAT REALLY MAKES A CHILD LIKELY TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL?”***

confronted with these “facts”, teachers usually respond with a “so what” attitude. They can tell you first hand that the reasons are acknowledged, but since they can’t do anything about any of them, why are they forced to see these facts over and over again? They can’t make a child wealthier, or change their race/ethnicity, or cure their disabilities, or make the district smaller, or send them to a state with a smaller population.

**So what really makes a child likely to drop out of school?**

That is the question I have had for 25 years. When I had to pick a topic for my dissertation, I chose this very topic. In

order to truly understand what makes a child drop out of school, we have to look deeper. AND we have to look at the outliers. What are the outliers? The outliers are the children that make it through even though they hit all of the items on the “fail” list. The outliers are the children who fail even though they hit all the “success” factors.

Please don’t misunderstand me! I feel that it is very important for the general public to be exposed to these facts and statistics often enough to know that these disparities exist. It also helps with gaining funding and policies that will provide more opportunities for at-risk children. But



what is the actual profile of a high school dropout? Most likely, the student lives in the South or West and is a male minority. Most likely, the student is poor and lives in the inner city attending a majority minority school district. But we have been using the same statistics and have found the same results since research from 1988.

Interestingly enough, the Goals 2000 Campaign stated that:

*"It remains true that the majority of dropouts are*

*not those who seem to be most at risk. That is, although the dropout rate for blacks is 50% higher than for whites, ad twice as high for Hispanics, 66% of the actual dropouts are white, while just 17% are black and 13% are Hispanic. Moreover, most dropouts are not from broken homes, not poor, and not pregnant. Consequently, if our graduation rate is to climb to 90%, it will have to be achieved by putting greater emphasis on retaining students whose background and behavior are not generally thought of as the defining characteristics*

*who drop out (US DOE, Reaching the Goals, p.1)."*

### So why do students really drop out of school?

While the reasons are both social and academic, individual and institutional, problems really start in Kindergarten and require early interventions. In order to effectively reduce the dropout rate, we first have to identify a child that is truly at-risk. Then, we need to address the problems those children face in their daily lives, both social and academic. And we need to focus on the school district and create policies that encourage success.

### So what can CPSI do to help?

The most important factor in interventions is real-time data. Does the teacher know what is going on in a child's life? Do all the teachers have the same knowledge? Is there some way to keep track of interventions so that the most effective ones are utilized?

The CPSI toolsets let you build a solid foundation for creating the complete picture of your district through clean, up-to-date, and standardized data. IT staff is given the tools they need to keep the data up-to-date in real time. Administrators are given the data they need to get funding, allocate resources more effectively, plan

# 13%

The overall dropout rate in the US is about 13% across all demographics and geographic areas.

# 9 out of 10

dropouts have been retained one or more years

(Schargel & Smink, 2001)

***"A robust Early Warning Indicator System helps ensure that teachers have the tools to make dropout prevention possible and identify students that quickly that are off-track and at-risk"***

(DQC, Data for Action 2011)



school growth, assess teachers, and understand program effectiveness. Teachers are enabled with the data they need so they can focus on their education mission and are equipped with the insights to meet the unique needs of their students. Parents are enabled with a secure environment with real-time information to help them actively engage with teachers. And students can benefit from the improved data in their quest to succeed.

The most important factor is to understand that student success or failure begins the first day they enter school, not after they start attending high school. If we can create a real-time data system for our students that tracks the important data, and can act on that data successfully, then we will begin to solve the dropout crisis.

**If you would like to learn more about CPSI or would like to schedule a demo of any of our products, please visit our website at <http://www.cpsiltd.com>. You can also call us at (800) 659-8240 or e-mail us at [sales@cpsiltd.com](mailto:sales@cpsiltd.com).**

*"Data helps educators understand the point at which student success or failure is evident and that data needs to be in the hands of classroom teachers. The most important aspect of using early warning indicators is the ability of the educator to transform the data presented to them into actionable strategies and interventions." (Pinkus, 2008)*

