A person is sitting on a wooden bench in front of a building with classical columns. The person is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and light-colored pants. The building behind them has several windows and columns. The overall scene is somewhat desaturated, with a blueish tint.

# The Cost of Dropping *Out of School*

U.S. Department of Labor  
Employment and Training Administration  
Community Audit Grant

Grant Applicant: Iowa Region 11 Workforce Investment Board  
Fiscal Agent: Central Iowa Employment and Training Consortium  
Subcontractor and Research Agent: Des Moines Area Community College

**Community Audit Study**  
August, 2003

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The negative consequences of dropping out of high school have been well known and documented for decades. Although much of central Iowa enjoys relatively high levels of high school completion, the economic impact—for both individuals and the employers who need well-educated, highly skilled workers—indicates that our high school dropout rates still are a cause for concern.

The Central Iowa Employment and Training Consortium (CIETC) and Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) conducted this important research into the multiple factors leading our young people to drop out of high school, and the attitudes in the business community toward employing high school dropouts and dislocated workers. Those dislocated workers, without a high school diploma or GED, face real employment challenges.

We hope this report, and the implementation of its recommendations, will result in more of our young people successfully completing high school and the expansion of a skilled workforce to meet the needs of employers. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact a member of the Community Audit Implementation Team.

Sincerely,

Ramona Cunningham  
Executive Director  
CIETC

Dory Briles  
Senior Vice President, Development  
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# Statement of the Problem

The issue of high school dropouts is a major social and economic problem. School dropouts pose a complex subject for educators, students, families, schools, communities, employers, and policy makers. Dropping out of high school can increase the probability of subsequent criminal behavior (Thornberry, Moore, and Christenson, 1985), lower occupational and economic prospects (Rumberger, 1987; Steinberg, Blinde, and Chan, 1984), and lower lifetime earnings (Catterall, 1985; Rumberger, 1987; Steinberg et al., 1984). Higher dropout rates lead to lower tax revenues and increased expenditures for governmental assistance programs (Catterall, 1985; Levin, 1972; Rumberger, 1987; Steinberg et al., 1984).

As the U.S. population ages, greater workforce dependence will be placed on a much smaller youth population. An aging workforce, combined with an increasing emphasis on higher levels of skills and global competitiveness, creates a situation where the U.S. cannot afford to tolerate the current school dropout levels (Rumberger, 2001). Dropout rates in the state of Iowa have not seen any improvement during the last decade. The concerns of an aging workforce are particularly evident in the state of Iowa, where the numbers of people over 74 is larger than the number under the age of 5. Dropouts cost the State of Iowa \$107.3 million during the 2001 fiscal year in lost tax revenues and an additional \$1 million due to higher unemployment costs (Veale, 2002). Determining the factors and life circumstances that influence individuals in central Iowa to drop out of high school will be important in determining steps to be taken to lower dropout rates and to graduate students who will go on to live better, more productive lives.

On average, dropouts are more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates and to earn less money when they eventually secure work. High school dropouts are also more likely to receive public assistance than high school graduates who do not go on to college. This increased reliance on public assistance is likely due, at least in part, to the fact that young women who drop out of school are more likely to have children at younger ages and more likely to be single parents than high school graduates. The individual stresses and frustrations associated with dropping out have social implications as well: dropouts make up a disproportionate percentage of the nation's prison and death row inmates. *National Center for Education Statistics, 2000*

## Executive Summary

*The connection between career prospects and education could not be more clear: Seventy percent of the fastest-growing jobs will require an education beyond high school.*

This research study seeks to better understand why students drop out of high school, and attitudes among business leaders to employing high school dropouts. The Central Iowa Employment and Training Consortium (CIETC) and Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) designed and administered an extensive research program of both high school dropouts and central Iowa employers. The research was comprised of three studies:

1. A survey instrument mailed to area businesses,
2. Focus group studies of high school dropouts and dislocated workers, and
3. Telephone surveys of high school dropouts.

Based on the findings of this research, the grant implementation team developed a set of recommendations.

# Research Methods

**This community audit research comprised four components:**

1. Focus group research of high school dropouts
2. Focus group research of dislocated workers
3. Telephone survey of high school dropouts
4. Mailed survey of central Iowa employers

## Focus Groups

Essman/Research, a marketing research firm in Des Moines, Iowa, was retained by DMACC to conduct focus groups with two segments of individuals: 1) students who left high school without graduating, and 2) individuals who have lost their job within the last 12 months due to their company/plant's closing or downsizing.

The objectives for the focus groups were to: 1) identify career and employment aspirations, 2) identify the skills or classes needed to achieve these aspirations, 3) identify the employment barriers in achieving employment goals, 4) understand the assistance required or needed in order to achieve employment goals, 5) identify awareness of organizations or occupations that provide assistance for achieving employment goals, and 6) learn preferences for learning (i.e. setting, location, time of day, etc.)

Additional objectives for the high school dropout groups were to: 1) explore expectations for high school — their own, their parents, and their high school's expectations for the student, 2) understand their attitudes about high school, and 3) understand what would have made a difference for them to stay in high school.

## Telephone Survey of High School Dropouts

Essman/Research, an independent marketing research firm in Des Moines, Iowa, was retained by DMACC to conduct a 46-item telephone survey to identify whether family-related, student-related or school-related factors affect high school dropout rates. In addition, the survey gathered information on the current lives and future plans of the dropouts.

To obtain statistically projectable data that can be generalized to the population, Essman/Research conducted 171 telephone interviews (average length 15 minutes) in May, 2003 with high school dropouts in the central Iowa area. The sample size required to produce statistically accurate and reliable survey results is based on the confidence level and the margin of error. On the total sample of 171 interviews, at a 95% confidence level, the maximum margin of error is approximately +/-7.4%.

## Survey of Central Iowa Employers

DMACC and CIETC surveyed 1,024 businesses in the spring of 2003 regarding the hiring, training and satisfaction with dropouts and displaced workers. The 219 respondents (15 percent response rate) included a diverse group of companies including manufacturing, health care, biotechnology, information technology, insurance/financial service, retail, service and skilled trades. The survey sample included a random sample from the membership lists of the Ames Chamber of Commerce, the Boone Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Des Moines Partnership.



# Opinions of Business Employers

DMACC and CIETC, surveyed 1,024 businesses in the spring of 2003 regarding the hiring, training and satisfaction with dropouts and displaced workers. The 219 respondents (15 percent response rate) included a diverse group of companies including manufacturing, health care, biotechnology, information technology, insurance/financial service, retail, service and skilled trades. The survey sample included a random sample from the membership lists of the Ames Chamber of Commerce, the Boone Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Des Moines Partnership.

Of all the businesses responding, only 43.4% said that they hire individuals without a high school diploma or GED. None of the biotech or information tech companies hire people with less than a high school diploma. Almost half of the respondents not hiring dropouts cited, "lack of skills" as a primary reason.

Even when hired, their prospects are usually limited to lower paying jobs. According to the survey, 70% of all dropouts currently employed by surveyed companies are working in labor, service or clerical positions. Only 1.6% are working as managers and none are working in professional/ technical areas. When dropouts are hired they can expect to make \$8.00 to \$13.00 dollars an hour. Managers and professional/ technical employees can expect to make two to three times that amount.

To address the problems of dropouts and displaced workers, businesses were questioned regarding their willingness to help. Only 4% of all companies surveyed indicated they could help by offering GED/high school completion classes at their company. All of these companies are in either the retail or service industries.

When asked to help with dropout prevention activities, 18% indicated they would be willing to help. Businesses willing to assist with dropout prevention activities were willing to help with mentoring, job shadowing or serving in an advisory capacity. When asked if they would hire youth who have completed training under the Workforce Investment Act, 25% of businesses surveyed said they would hire these youth. Only biotechnology and information technology business types would not hire these youth.

Of all business surveyed, 16% said they would assist in hiring and retraining dislocated workers. Biotechnology, information technology, insurance/finance would not be able to hire and retrain these people.

Of those who do hire individuals without a high school diploma or GED, the occupations for those employees were reported as follows:

Occupation	Number of Employees
Professional/Technical.....	0
Manager or Administrative.....	13
Operator/Assembler .....	15
Sales/Marketing .....	18
Craft Worker/Installer/Repairer .....	27
Clerical/Support.....	109
Laborer .....	147
Service Worker .....	283
Other.....	145

# Opinions of Dislocated Workers

When asked, "what types of jobs/positions you would most like to have?" participants responded with a range of positions. A few participants want to stay in their current industry and enhance their current job with licensure or advanced education. Several wish to pursue completely new directions and need training in: 1) nursing and health care, 2) child care, 3) office work, with a focus on computers, 4) music/visual arts, and 5) contractor with carpentry license.

For those participants who were looking for a career change, they offered these reasons:

- Computers/automation are taking over – one needs to learn computer skills to compete
- Need to get training within a federally accredited program in order to get federal aid
- A job that is rewarding, something I enjoy doing, or by helping others
- The need to plan for retirement, the need for greater income, as many don't believe they will have any paid retirement
- A job that provides interaction with other people
- A new job as my health is prohibiting me from doing jobs I used to do (heavy lifting, etc.)

Participants identified a variety of skills they need to pursue a new career or enhance their existing position: 1) computer skills, 2) GED, and 3) health care/nursing classes, 4) inter-personal communications skills, 5) networking skills, and 6) tutoring.

Nearly half of the participants are interested in positions in health care or child care. They know they need training in order to get the jobs with the higher salaries. Participants would like the opportunity to network with peers and to brainstorm career objectives, ideas, etc. in a small group setting. Several participants would like tutoring opportunities to assist them in doing well on tests.

Participants acknowledged that the current job market is terrible, especially to move up. Lateral changes are easier to find. And when they do find an opportunity, employers want experience, which participants don't yet have in that particular industry. They find the process frustrating. Other reactions to the existing job market:

- 1) lots of budget cuts, especially in health care, thus hurting opportunities for CNAs,
- 2) lots of downsizing in companies,
- 3) new legislation is helping companies, but it's not trickling down to employees, and
- 4) not being paid what we're worth.

They perceived the following barriers in their job searches:

- Participants believe employers frown upon/discriminate against tattoos and body piercings.
- For those individuals who have a criminal record (have been convicted as a felon), they don't want to lie on the application, so they put their record down. But then, they believe, employers discriminate against them.
- Participants find it difficult to navigate through the job search process. They don't know where to go to get assistance. If they need their GED, they don't know where to go to obtain the GED.
- Participants find it extremely difficult to pay for school or additional training, as their income goes to take care of their home, their kids and transportation to get to work.
- Participants worry about having quality child care as well as paying for child care.

- Participants do not have much faith or respect for the state and its assistance programs. 'The State says, do this, follow this procedure in order to get help; we do; then in turn, they don't help us out, or they change the rules on us.'
- Participants responded with several issues relative to having transportation to get to work or to training/classes.
- No driver's license (either due to driving record or past criminal record)
- Lack of sufficient bus routes to get them where they need to go
- Not being able to afford car insurance, thus rely on others for transportation

When participants were asked what help they need, they mentioned:

- Career counseling and testing for aptitude and personal skills. Basic job search skills are also needed. Many expressed the desire to have a mentor.

*Note: When participants were asked if they would like assistance with personal finance issues, budgeting, saving, etc., they responded by saying, No. 'We need more money before we can even think of budgeting, saving. We live paycheck to paycheck.'*



# Opinions of High School Dropouts

## Focus Group Findings

### Expectations of high school

Participants were asked to discuss their expectations of high school.

Their responses included:

- Get good grades
- Wanted to just pass
- Finish high school, unlike older brothers
- Graduate early so can move on
- Wanted to get a scholarship for culinary school
- Fit in — be one with the crowd
- Had to work full-time instead of being in school as I was in and out of foster homes. I worked through independent study

Participants were asked to discuss their parents' expectations for them in high school.

- Had lots of rules
- She labeled me the thing with a brain but she didn't care about school or the structure of school
- Wanted me to get top grades
- Expected too much of me, thus I became rebellious
- Wanted me to be an adult too early
- My parents wanted me in school but they weren't around much

The participants identified the expectations they believed the school had for them as students.

- Wanted me to be there, always be in school
- A student can get labeled if he/she has behavioral problems
- A student can get labeled based on his/her sibling's past behavior (good or bad)
- Most students didn't know their counselors. But they believe their role was to assist with defining a focus and goal setting for students.
- Some felt that counselors just want students to "deal with it."
- Teachers act more interested if a student needs/requests help with schoolwork.

- Participants wanted more one-on-one assistance with teachers and counselors. They didn't feel teachers and counselors took a personal interest in them.
- Teachers just want to push students through the system.
- Teachers have various tolerance levels, which aren't always positive.

Participants were asked what they liked and didn't like about high school:

Some participants were placed in alternative classes vs. being in the mainstream. They really liked this change and believed they learned more in these settings. Alternative classrooms were more suitable for many of these participants. Some felt like they received more respect in school than at home. Others liked making friends or being with friends. Having "stuff" to do and English as a Second Language class were also mentioned.

Some participants didn't like it at all from junior high through high school. There was too much peer pressure for dress and appearance and drugs and alcohol. Others weren't challenged in high school. Many teachers had strict attitudes and

expectations. Participants didn't like some classes (math and history) and felt classes were too big. Students would have liked more vocational courses. The inconveniences of detention caused others to dislike school.

### School Involvement

Most participants were active in some way – a wide variety of activities were mentioned. Some saw it as an escape from being at home. Some just wanted to be with friends. Most participants didn't really believe there were barriers for being involved. It was a personal choice and there were lots of opportunities. For those participants that weren't involved, it was due to personal initiative, rather than being excluded.



Participants were asked what they would have changed about high school

- My family moved too much — went to too many schools
- I would have focused more on getting good grades
- I needed after school transportation
- Open enrollment — so if not in the district, you don't have to pay extra to go to a different school
- Having money to buy clothes, and 'stuff kids want' — there is a lot of pressure to have what other kids have

Many responded that they should have been more responsible and focused more on the importance of school. Things they mentioned as making a difference for staying in school included:

- Ability to stay in the same school with my friends
- Unplanned pregnancy
- Better communication from school about what was needed to complete high school
- More one-on-one assistance
- Not placing so much focus on what others think
- Not doing drugs, or running around with the wrong people

When asked what type of jobs they are most interested in, participants mentioned:

- Entertainment, DJ, nursing/health care, day care, chef, computers/technology, law, and automotive businesses.

A few participants weren't as goal-oriented and didn't have a specific type of job they were interested in. However, they did offer these comments.

- I just want a better job.
- I want a job where I don't have to live paycheck to paycheck.
- I want a job that will allow me not to be dependent on the state.

They listed several ways to overcome barriers to employment:

1) have a positive attitude, 2) have a mentor; someone who would provide support and guidance throughout the process, 3) have the appropriate resources needed to obtain and keep employment — financial resources and transportation, 4) appropriate clothing for interviewing and the workplace, and 5) the appropriate experience desired by employers were also mentioned.

When participants were asked what help they need to achieve your employment goals — they mentioned:

1) internships, 2) assistance with job placement, 3) computer classes, 4) GED classes, 5) financial assistance, 6) affordable day care, 7) time management skills, 8) understanding my aptitude, and 9) assistance with drafting my resume.

All participants prefer one-on-one instruction for learning or small groups. These participants seem intimidated about learning and they find large classrooms too big, even a little scary. The preference is that classes are offered in facilities close to the bus line, close to downtown. They did indicate that there are better jobs in the suburbs; however, facilities closer to downtown are easier for transportation. During the day, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. is most desirable time for classes. Some participants responded that even though they prefer day sessions, evenings are more practical for child care issues. Also, buses don't run on weekends, so they prefer attending class during the week and not on the weekends.

When asked about barriers in finding the jobs they want, they stated:

- Need a diploma or GED
- Having appropriate work experience
- Discrimination exists with some employers
- My background and history (behavioral issues, criminal record, etc.)
- First impressions - where I live in the city and attitude towards my appearance (tattoos, piercings)
- Need to be able to speak and write English
- Day care issues
- Dress codes — I either don't have or can't afford the type of clothes that employers want
- Appropriate and reliable transportation
- State governmental programs — can't accept overtime, etc. if still on food stamps
- I need a mentor to assist me with the process of obtaining employment, fulfilling my goals

# Opinions of High School Dropouts

## Telephone Survey of High School Dropouts

Conducting research with the population of high school dropouts proved to be extremely difficult. First, there was great difficulty securing names and telephone numbers of dropouts from local school districts. Once 3,028 names and phone numbers were collected, the success rate of completed interviews was disappointing. Only 171 interviews were conducted instead of the planned 350. Reasons for non-completion included: wrong numbers (910), refusals (291), in jail or missing (151), under 18 years of age (97), hearing or language barrier (38), group homes or youth centers (37), fax number (32), and parent indicating under age 18 (28).

### Research Strategy

To understand "why" students dropped out of high school, Essman/Research conducted 171 telephone interviews with students who had dropped out of high school within the past four years. To comply with DMACC standards for conducting human subject research, all respondents less than 18 years of age were eliminated from the project. Participation in the telephone survey was strictly voluntary. To ensure the confidentiality of all respondents, the responses to each survey question were reported in the aggregate. The qualified respondents were also provided with an option to "skip" a question if the respondent deemed the question too sensitive.

DMACC provided the sample (3,028 names). The lists were compiled from the following sources: 1) school districts within the 11-county service area in central Iowa, and 2) students registered in the DMACC Youth-at-Risk program. DMACC was identified as the sponsor of the research project.

### Summary of Findings

Forty-four percent of the dropouts – a higher percentage of females than males – indicated that school activities did not help them feel they belonged in school. Nearly half of all dropouts surveyed rarely or never participated in school activities.

Although the dropouts did not take issue with teachers or their approach, more than half of the respondents said they needed more individual help to learn. A higher number of those dropouts who needed more individual help included: dropouts who attended a large high school, African American or Hispanic students or dropouts who had been held back a year. When asked what could have motivated them to stay in school, the top answer was "more help/better understanding of work/better teachers/more communication."

Today, more than half of the dropouts are working toward a GED and another 26% already have completed a GED or alternative high school diploma. More than half of the respondents are employed – almost 25% in food service and 21% as a laborer. Fifty-four percent earn \$7.99 or less per hour. Most feel they need to attend college to have the type of job they desire.

### Demographics

A total of 88 (51%) males and 83 (49%) females are represented in the survey. Nearly 36% (61 of 171) of the survey respondents are 18 years of age.

Current Age	Total
<b>171 (100%)</b>	
18 Years Old .....	61
<b>35.7%</b>	
19 Years Old .....	37
<b>21.6%</b>	
20 Years Old .....	36
<b>21.2%</b>	
21 Years Old .....	19
<b>11.1%</b>	
22 Years Old .....	8
<b>4.7%</b>	
23 or Older .....	10
<b>5.8%</b>	

### Ethnicity

Seventy-six percent (127 of 167) of the survey respondents are Caucasian.

Ethnicity	Total
<b>167 (100%)</b>	
Caucasian.....	127
<b>76.0%</b>	
Hispanic.....	16
<b>9.6%</b>	
African American.....	13
<b>7.8%</b>	
Bi-racial.....	6
<b>3.6%</b>	
Asian.....	4
<b>2.4%</b>	
Pacific Islander.....	1
<b>0.6%</b>	
Skip.....	4

### English as primary language

English is the primary language spoken among 93% (159 of 171) of the survey respondents.

English Language	Total
<b>171 (100%)</b>	
Yes.....	159
<b>93.0%</b>	
No.....	12
<b>7.0%</b>	

### Family Income

Slightly more than 56% (78 of 138) of the respondents reported their family income, at the time they left high school, between \$20,000 and \$50,000.

Family Income	Total
<b>138 (100%)</b>	
Less than \$20,000 per year.....	37
<b>26.8%</b>	
\$20,000 - \$50,000 per year.....	78
<b>56.5%</b>	
More than \$50,000 per year.....	23
<b>16.7%</b>	
Skip.....	3
<b>Don't Know.....</b>	<b>30</b>

### Dropout year

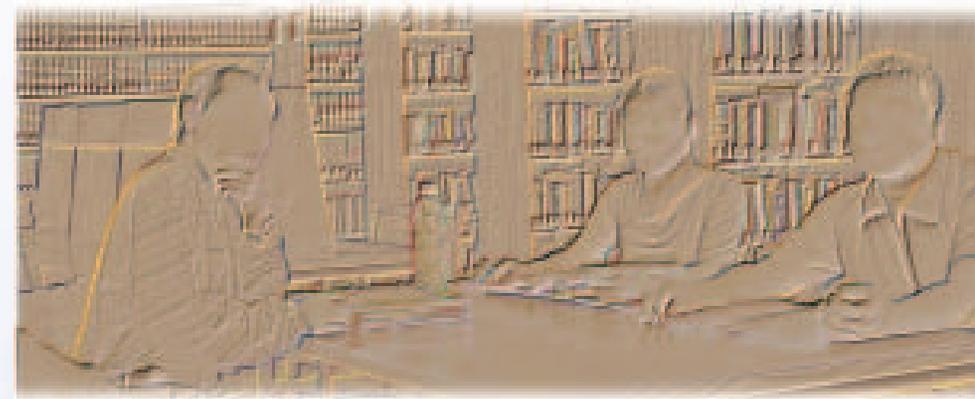
More than 30% (53 of 168) of the survey respondents dropped out of high school in their junior year followed closely by the sophomore and senior year (equally at 27.4%).

Drop Out Year	Total
<b>168 (100%)</b>	
Freshman.....	23
<b>13.7%</b>	
Sophomore.....	46
<b>27.4%</b>	
Junior.....	53
<b>31.5%</b>	
Senior.....	46
<b>27.4%</b>	
Skip.....	1
<b>Don't Know.....</b>	<b>2</b>

### Presence of children

Over thirty-five percent (60 of 170) of the survey respondents have children. A much higher percentage of females (48%/39 of 82) than males (24%/21 of 88) currently have children.

Children	Total
<b>170 (100%)</b>	
Yes.....	60
<b>35.3%</b>	
No.....	110
<b>64.7%</b>	
Skip.....	1



# Opinions of High School Dropouts

## Student-related factors

Twenty-five percent of the high school dropouts who responded to the survey felt they "did not fit" in at high school." Sixteen percent were "undecided" or "neutral."

- Nearly half (48%) of all respondents rarely or never participated in school activities, such as student dances, school sports or music groups.
- Nearly 50% of the dropouts skipped classes often (very or fairly often) while in high school.
- 46.7 percent of the respondents did not use alcohol or drugs while in high school. Of these respondents, 67% were students who dropped out during their freshman year in school. However, 13% reported using alcohol or drugs more than seven times a week while in high school, a combined 29.6% more than three to four times a week, and over 53% from one to seven or more times per week.
- 27.5 percent of the dropouts surveyed were referred to Juvenile Court Services for delinquent behavior while in high school.

- Forty-eight percent of all survey respondents attended 2-3 different high schools. Another 47% attended one school.
- Nearly 84% of the survey respondents said pregnancy was not a reason for dropping out of high school. However, pregnancy was a more significant factor among the female respondents (28%/23 of 82) than with males (6%/5 of 88).

The top three reasons, among females, for dropping out of high school included:

- Pregnancy .....21%
- Drugs .....13%
- Disliked school/teachers/principal.....11%

The top three reasons, among males, for dropping out of high school included:

- Bad grades/didn't learn anything in school .....21%
- Bored/didn't want to go to school.....20%
- Kicked out of school/expelled.....12%

The top three potential motivators, among females, for staying in high school would have been:

- More help/better understanding of the work .....39%
- Not getting pregnant/teach safe sex.....15%
- Better grades .....9%
- Provide counseling for family problems .....9%

The top three potential motivators, among males, for staying in high school would have included:

- More help/better understanding of the work .....41%
- Better grades .....21%
- More interesting information/more activities or choices of classes .....12%

## School-related Factors

- The majority of respondents surveyed attended a large high school (69%) followed by a medium-sized high school (16%), and a small high school (12%).
- Nearly 26% of the dropouts believe their high school's expectations for them were too low and 14.5% too high.
- Forty percent of all students surveyed were held back a year while in school. A higher percentage of males (46% than females (35%) were held back.

Using a 1-5 point scale where five is strongly agree, four is agree, three is neutral, two is disagree and one is strongly disagree, the respondents rated each of the following statements.

The table reflects the overall mean relative to how the survey respondents described their high school experiences.

Statement	Overall Mean
I felt I fit in at high school .....	3.40
My high school courses were relevant to me.....	3.37
I needed more individual help to learn.....	3.27
Vocational or technical classes were more relevant than other classes.....	3.27
Teachers taught me in a way that was easy for me to learn.....	3.21
Counselors and teachers helped me feel that I belonged in school.....	3.04
High school activities helped me feel that I belonged in school .....	2.81

## Family-related factors

- The dropouts said 47% of their mothers and 44% of their fathers attained a high school education.
- Fourteen percent of the mothers and 20% of the fathers only attained a grade school or middle school education.
- Although 60% of the survey respondents did not have a brother or sister drop out of high school, more than 32% of the dropouts indicated that 1 or 2 of their siblings had dropped out of high school.
- Nearly 22 percent of the high school dropouts surveyed indicated that there were problems with substance abuse or mental health problems in the household at the time they dropped out of school.
- According to the dropouts, their parents/guardians attended school conferences and school activities.  
59% attended very or fairly often  
17% attended sometimes  
25% attended rarely or never

## Current Lives and Future Plans

More than half (54%/91 of 169) of the dropouts surveyed are currently employed. A higher percentage of males (64%/56 of 87) than females (43%/35 of 82) are currently employed. Eighty-one percent (74 of 91) of the dropouts who are currently employed are working full-time (30 hours or more a week.)

In the past two years, a majority of the survey respondents have worked in the fast food/food service industry (50.3%) or as laborers (30.6%). Thirty-one percent (43 of 143) of the survey respondents reported their recent hourly income between \$7.00 and \$7.99 an hour. A much higher percentage of females (61%/41 of 67) compared with males (47%/36 of 76) reported their most recent income between \$7.00 and \$7.99 or less per hour. More than half (56%/94 of 168) of the respondents have held 1-2 jobs in the past two years. Another 28% (47 of 168) have held 3-4 jobs. A higher percentage of females (10%/8 of 80) compared with males (1%/1 of 88) have never held a job in the past two years.

Thirty percent of the high school dropouts who responded to the survey would like to have a professional or technical job or a job in the medical field (doctor, nurse or dental). More than 61% (74 of 121) of the dropouts who responded believe they will need a college education in order to get the types of jobs they would like to have. Another 50% (60 of 121) of the dropouts need to get their GED. A slightly higher percentage of females (56%) than males (43%) need to get their GED.

Nearly 70% (114 of 166) of the respondents have plans for attending college and there were no significant differences among males and females. A significantly higher percentage of females (30%/25 of 83) than males (8%/7 of 84) are receiving public assistance. It was also noted that of the high school dropouts who said they are receiving public assistance:

- 24% were high school dropouts who were held back a year
- 26% were students who dropped out of high school during their freshman year
- 24% were African American/Hispanic students
- 22% were dropouts with a household family income between \$20,000 - \$50,000



# Recommendations

1. Providers of education and training need to accommodate different learning styles.
  - Integrate movement and activity in classroom instruction
  - Include hands-on activities
  - Utilize learning communities – integrated learning cohort groups
  - Offer more classes that are small in number of students
  - Offer more one-on-one assistance
  - Simplify the registration and orientation processes
2. Provide career information in a coordinated fashion via a Career Solution Center.
  - Conduct smaller entry-level career fairs that are offered in a variety of locations throughout the community
  - Offer a Career Seminar with information about job applications, interviewing, educational requirements, financial aid, etc.
  - Increase the availability of career aptitude testing and counseling
3. There is a need for a more integrated approach within the one-stop system to provide services to high school dropouts and dislocated workers who have less than a high school education.
4. Provide networks of support and connections.
  - Business and Industry could provide mentoring and career exploration
  - Pair faculty with at-risk students
  - Meaningful connections for students and dropouts with one or more adults
5. Expand DMACC's Youth-at-Risk model to targeted At-Risk Adults. This model incorporates cohort groups, vocational advisors, small study groups, assessment, and an Orientation to College course.
6. People providing education and services to this population must have an appreciation of the individual student's culture and seek to know the student on a one-to-one basis.
7. Provide more financial assistance and scholarships for dropouts enrolling in developmental education courses, ABE/GED, and college preparatory courses.
8. Offer an armed services preparatory program and include vocational education.
9. Increase promotion about the availability of GED courses.
10. CIETC and DMACC should work more closely with local school districts to help prevent students from dropping out of high school. This involvement could be in a variety of areas:
  - Career Information and Counseling
  - Mentoring
  - Academic Assessment and Achievement
  - Career Technology Education
11. To address the complexity of students' lives today, schools and colleges need to explore offering flexible scheduling and alternative learning opportunities.

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