



*On the 2014 campaign trail
for Michigan's children*

July 15, 2014

The Facts about High School Graduation Rates and Why It Matters to Policy Makers

Who's dropping out of school in Michigan.

- ✓ The good news: Fewer young people, particularly youth of color, are dropping out of school than in recent years.
- ✓ Despite improvements, more than one in every ten students who should have graduated in 2013 left high school without a diploma. Dropout rates rise to one in every five Black students and one in six Hispanic and American Indian students.
- ✓ Increasing numbers of students need more than four years to complete high school and graduate.

There is strong research that allows us to predict which students are at-risk of dropping out.

- ✓ Students facing personal and educational obstacles are much more likely to not complete school.
- ✓ School discipline policies often contribute to student disengagement and lost credits.

Additional time in high school improves graduation rates for everybody.

- ✓ Graduation rates increased for all groups after a fifth or sixth year of high school. Those additional years are significantly more important for students of color and those with other challenges.

High school graduation must be part of this year's election conversation and successful candidates must be held accountable for change. A high school diploma is essential to future educational attainment, employment opportunities and lifelong success. With the 2014 campaign season under way, candidates need to know that it is important for elected officials to focus on building paths to success for struggling students, schools and communities. Decision makers at all levels should:

Support multiple pathways to graduation that provide more time and flexibility for students. Improve support for the paths we currently employ, including alternative, adult and community education options, community college and workforce partnerships. In addition, other pathways that utilizing a broad range of community resources must be created to consistently serve young people throughout the state.

Invest in proven strategies from cradle to career. Young people face barriers to graduation that education alone cannot remove. Students need access to essential services and coordination across health, mental health, social services, and other supports to ensure they stay on a path to a high school credential.

Address suspension and expulsion rates. Students of color experience far greater rates of suspension and expulsion than their peers. Current suspension and expulsion policy and its disproportionate effect on youths of color must be reviewed, schools must be provided with incentives to create discipline alternatives.

Stop diminishing services. Disinvestment in the very communities most in need does not promote innovation, partnership or reform. Evidence-based support programs will need to be expanded in order to see real, sustainable improvement in school success for those most challenged schools, communities and young people.