



Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth

Case Statement: Thirty thousand young people who entered ninth grade in the School District of Philadelphia's Classes of 2000-05 failed to graduate four years later.¹ Resulting losses are huge - to lifetime earnings and employment for these young people, to government revenues and to the regional economy.² Fortunately, a renewed interest in the out-of-school youth population in Philadelphia and across the country in recent years is leading to a growing understanding of the challenges faced by these young people, and to an increasing body of effective practices aimed at reconnecting them to high-quality educational opportunities with pathways to postsecondary education and careers.

Research-Based Practices that Reconnect Out-of-School Youth to Education and Employment:

- **A Variety of Educational Options (“Multiple Pathways”).** Communities need a system for youth development and opportunity that includes a diversity of educational programming to re-engage out-of-school youth, and collaboration across multiple agencies and systems.³ For example:
 - **Smaller, student-focused high schools.** Small credit-recovery high schools have proven successful in helping over-age and under-credited students return to high school and graduate.⁴
 - **GED Plus.** National data show that close to 60% of dropouts eventually earn a GED, but very few gain college degrees or certificates. However, bridge programs are demonstrating success in helping GED recipients transition successfully to college.⁵
 - **College-Based Programming.** This approach enables former dropouts to enroll in college, earning a high school diploma and credits towards a college credential.⁶
- **Blending Education and Employment.** Successful models often blend education with employment so that older, disconnected youth can build education credentials while learning skills and earning money.⁷
- **Specialized Programming for High-Risk Youth.** Youth involved in the juvenile justice and/or foster care systems benefit from support that helps to smooth transitions, integrate them into their communities and stabilize them in their educational and social settings.⁸

Related Efforts In Philadelphia...

- The School District operates several educational options for over-age and under-credited students, and has recently issued an RFP to fund new capacity for innovative schools.
- YouthBuild Charter School provides an education/work programmatic blend focusing on the construction trades for former dropouts.
- Gateway-to-College at CCP enables former dropouts to earn a HS diploma and credits toward a college degree.
- In Summer 2008, the School District opened a Re-Engagement Center for youth returning to education.
- With Project U-Turn, the city has become a recognized national leader in dropout prevention and re-engagement efforts, with more than \$50M leveraged from government and foundation investments.
- Philadelphia has five community-based E³ centers that provide education and training for out-of-school youth.

¹ Neild, Ruth Curran and Robert Balfanz. 2006. *Unfulfilled Promise: The Dimensions and Characteristics of Philadelphia's Dropout Crisis, 2000-2005*. Philadelphia: Youth Transitions Collaborative.

² Fogg, Neeta P. et. al. 2009. *The Tax and Transfer Fiscal Impacts of Dropping Out of High School in Philadelphia City and Suburbs*. Boston: Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies.

³ Steinberg, Adria et. al. 2003. *Four Building Blocks for a System of Educational Opportunity: Developing Pathways to and Through College for Urban Youth*. Boston: Jobs for the Future.

⁴ The Parthenon Group. 2008. *Pathways to Graduation: Data-Driven Strategies for Differentiated Graduation Rate Improvements*. For the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

⁵ Almeida, Cheryl et. al. 2006. *Making Good on a Promise: What Policy Makers Can Do to Support the Educational Persistence of Dropouts*. Boston: Jobs for the Future.

⁶ *Breaking Through: Helping Low-Skilled Adults Enter and Succeed in College and Careers*. 2004. Boston: Jobs for the Future.

⁷ Allen, L. et. al. 2004. *From the Prison Track to the College Track*. Boston: Jobs for the Future, and

Pines, Marion, ed. 1999. *Making Connections: Youth Program Strategies for a Generation of Challenge*. Baltimore: Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

⁸ Wald, Michael and Tia Martinez. 2003. *Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country's Most Disadvantaged 14-24 Year-Olds*. For the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.