



# Dropping Out: Why Students Drop Out of High School and What Can Be Done About It

*Russell W. Rumberger*

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The vast majority of kids in the developed world finish high school?but not in the United States. More than a million kids drop out every year, around 7,000 a day, and the numbers are rising. *Dropping Out* offers a comprehensive overview by one of the country's leading experts, and provides answers to fundamental questions: Who drops out, and why? What happens to them when they do? How can we prevent at-risk kids from short-circuiting their futures?

Students start disengaging long before they get to high school, and the consequences are severe?not just for individuals but for the larger society and economy. Dropouts never catch up with high school graduates on any measure. They are less likely to find work at all, and more likely to live in poverty, commit crimes, and suffer health problems. Even life expectancy for dropouts is shorter by seven years than for those who earn a diploma.

Rumberger advocates targeting the most vulnerable students as far back as the early elementary grades. And he levels sharp criticism at the conventional definition of success as readiness for college. He argues that high schools must offer all students what they need to succeed in the workplace and independent adult life. A more flexible and practical definition of achievement?one in which a high school education does not simply qualify you for more school?can make school make sense to young people. And maybe keep them there.

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