

Why You Should Stay in School

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Julianne Dueber is a former high school teacher and author of *The Ultimate High School Survival Guide*. In the following excerpt from that book, Dueber provides reasons why students, even those who are struggling, should not drop out of high school. She argues that high school dropouts face much worse job prospects than do high school and college graduates. Furthermore, graduating from high school will earn you more respect both from others and yourself. Many communities have alternatives to regular public high schools for obtaining a high school education, including alternative schools, correspondence courses, and summer schools. In addition, people who have not finished high school can take a test and receive a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

Do you want to flip burgers the rest of your life? You will not be using your mind as well as you could if you stayed in school and got your education. Plus, by flipping burgers, you're constantly standing on your feet. Feet need a rest too. Give them a break. Stay in school and sit a spell.

High school dropouts earn much less than high school and college graduates. Check out the average hourly wage and annual salary of the following professions.

List 1 includes the type of jobs for which high school dropouts qualify. These are the jobs you will be doing if you do not finish high school.

List 2 includes jobs you can do with a high school diploma and additional training, either through trade school or an employer training program. No employer will consider training you for a career if you don't have that high school degree.

List 3 includes jobs for which you must have a college degree.

Notice the huge salary difference when you get a college degree. It makes a big difference to get more education. It pays to hang in there and keep on going. Some day you will be very glad you did.

Consider the Consequences

Fast food jobs are survival-only jobs. You will have to work overtime hours to pay all of your bills. Minimum wage jobs are dead-end jobs. If you are thinking of dropping out of high school, consider the consequences.

Higher education pays off big time. With your high school education and training after high school, you will be able to take better care of your future family. You will have enough extra money to travel and do the things you enjoy. You don't want to have to live with your parents because you can't afford to live on your own, do you? You need to graduate from high school, then get some training or a college education. That's just a fact of life.

You want some self-respect. If you drop out now, you will always regret it when you're older. People will not treat you with as much respect as they do people with more education. I have talked to numerous people who

did not continue their education after high school and they all regret not going on to trade school or college.

70 to 80 percent of criminals are high school dropouts. Because they are having a hard time paying their bills, they turn to crime to feed themselves and their families. Don't become a part of this tragic statistic.

High school graduates, on the average, earn \$6415 more per year than high school dropouts. Information gathered from the Bureau of the Census, 1994....

Students from low-income families are 2.4 times more likely to drop out of school than are children from middle-income families, and 10.5 times more likely than students from high-income families. Information gathered from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, 1993....

Other Options Besides Your High School

Some of you will have a hard time surviving in a regular public high school. When you think that there is no way for you to be successful, you might turn to cutting classes, doing drugs, or just drop out. If you find yourself in this situation and you have truly tried your hardest to do well but you just seem to keep getting into trouble, talk to your counselor about other options. Here are some of the things you can do instead of attending your regular public high school:

Some larger districts have magnet schools. If you live in a large school district that has magnet schools, call up the administrative office to check out what the requirements are for admission. Often, these schools have special schools for the arts, music, or technology. They can be a great option for students who are unhappy with their public high school.

Many districts have alternative schools for students who fail to succeed in the regular public high school. Ask your counselor if you can transfer. She will help you if she feels you need to make a change.

Summer school helps you get back on track. If you fail some classes and are hopelessly behind, you can catch up by taking summer school classes. It should help you to catch up with the classmates you started high school with. Do you want to be in classes with freshmen and sophomores when you should be a junior or senior?

Correspondence courses are another option. Some high schools allow you to take correspondence courses associated with your state university for credit. You have to be very motivated to work on your own, do the classwork, send it in, and take the tests. No one will be demanding that you take tests at a certain time. You alone will determine whether you pass the class.

The General Educational Development (GED) test. If you don't finish high school, you can take a test that certifies you have a high school-level knowledge of reading and writing skills and know English grammar. In addition, passing the test will show that you know as much math, social studies, and science as the typical high school graduate. When you pass the test, you will get a certificate known as the GED.

Students take the GED for many reasons. Some may be very bright and feel that high school is a waste of their time. Others take it because they had problems with drugs and alcohol in high school and either dropped

out or failed. Most students who pass the GED go on to a community college. Another option is to get a job with an employer who will train you for a profession. Many companies are willing to give a GED-certified student a chance if he shows lots of promise and ambition. In addition, some four-year colleges accept GED students. One university I know of even has a scholarship for high-scoring GED students.

You must never give up hope, even if you flunk several classes or drop out of high school. I know a boy who handcuffed himself to his bed so that he wouldn't have to go to school. He dropped out of high school, but later got his GED. He is making a good living now and has gone on to get a college degree. His grades were good, but he just hated high school. There are many routes to success and no student should ever feel that his life is hopeless. Never give up hope.

Further Readings

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