



SAFE SCHOOLS HEALTHY STUDENTS GRANTEES REPORT INCREASED GRADUATION RATES

High school graduates, on average, enjoy higher personal income, lead longer and healthier lives, and are less likely to be involved in crime than nongraduates.^{1,2} The Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative seeks to create and sustain healthy learning environments that help students thrive, build healthy relationships, and succeed in school. These goals are achieved by implementing evidence-based programs and activities that influence and improve the learning environment.

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests the learning environment and graduation are linked. The SS/HS Initiative targets specific issues that contribute to an unfavorable learning environment, such as unresolved mental health problems, substance use, and juvenile crime.

Mental health and substance use programming implemented by grantees prevents and treats mental, emotional, and substance use problems that interfere with learning. Programs addressing violence and crime in school help students feel safer and reduce bullying and distrust of authority. These program outcomes have a positive impact on the learning environment and are associated with higher graduation rates.³

Although dropouts are not tracked at the grantee level, results indicate the SS/HS Initiative has been successful in increasing graduation rates among participating school districts. With over 63 percent of grantees from the 2005 to 2007 cohorts reporting increased graduation rates over the grant period, the same percentage of grantees outperformed their respective States' overall graduation rates over the same period (i.e., increased more than or declined less than the State average).

High school graduates contribute an average of \$5,464 more in taxes than they receive in government benefits per year. The average amount dropouts contribute in taxes is \$671

less than the amount they receive in government benefits per year. This leads to an average annual benefit to taxpayers of \$6,135. When the benefit is multiplied over an entire work life (49 years), it amounts to more than \$300,000 per high school graduate.⁴

The benefits of increased graduation rates to society extend well beyond these numbers in the form of increased consumption and savings levels of high school graduates versus dropouts. When would-be dropouts elect to further their education in college and beyond, the benefits to society are even greater. Reduced crime rates associated with high school graduation confer additional benefits.²

The average annual fiscal benefit from converting one would-be dropout to a graduate is nearly double the dollar amount the average school earns per fundraiser⁵

Grantees reported an increase in coordination, service integration, and availability of services for their most at-risk students had a direct and profound impact on their graduation rates.

KEY FINDINGS

STUDENT GRADUATION RATES INCREASED IN THE MAJORITY OF GRANTEES

Between pre-grant and Year 3 across the 2005 to 2007 cohorts, graduation rates increased for almost two-thirds of grantees reporting.

Nearly two-thirds of grantees outpaced their respective States' overall graduation rate growth over the same period.

BENEFIT OF GRADUATION TO TAXPAYERS

If every grantee prevented just one student from dropping out, the average annual benefit to taxpayers associated with those 86 graduates would be approximately \$527,000.⁴ This benefit represents enough money to enroll 69 children in Head Start (a program linked to increased graduation rates)⁶ each year.*

*Cost of \$7,600 per child per year

REFERENCES

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³Freudenberg, N., & Ruglis, J. (2007). Reframing school dropout as a public health issue. *Prev Chronic Dis* 4(4). Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/oct/07_0063.htm.

⁴The Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University. (2007, December). *Fiscal consequences of adult educational attainment*. Boston, MA.

⁵Association of Fund-Raising Distributors and Suppliers. (2007). *AFRDS & Industry News*. Retrieved from http://www.afrds.org/fundraising_news.html

⁶Garces, E., Thomas, D., & Currie, J. (2002, September). Longer-term effects of Head Start. *American Economic Review*, 92(4), 999–1012.