



Center for Public Policy Priorities



CENTER for EDUCATION
RICE UNIVERSITY



Addressing the Dropout Crisis in Texas Principles for Action

January 2007

Every year, we are losing more than 120,000 young people from Texas schools prior to their graduation. One student is lost from public school enrollment every four minutes. The dropout crisis in Texas persists at tremendous cost to individual students, families, communities and the state.

It is time to change course. We call upon the state of Texas to take immediate action to address this issue, based on the following principles.

Principle 1: All students enrolled in Texas secondary schools should be expected, and must be supported, to graduate from high school with a regular high school diploma.

Principle 2: The state must restore the credibility of official dropout counts by accurately accounting for the educational status of every pupil that entered the ninth grade in any Texas secondary school.

Principle 3: Using Texas' excellent student-level longitudinal data, the state should implement a transparent and simple methodology to count and report on dropouts. Reporting should be readily available and easily accessible to the public. Reporting must directly inform communities and parents about status of the issue and progress being made to address it.

Principle 4: State efforts to decrease the dropout rate should recognize and address systemic issues that affect student graduation, documented by research (including teaching quality, curriculum quality and access, student engagement, etc.) and incorporate both dropout prevention and dropout recovery.

Principle 5: Ongoing evaluation must be an integral part of any effort at the state and local level to address the dropout problem.

Principle 6: In ensuring that all students graduate, schools should incorporate pedagogical changes that allow them to better adapt to the needs and strengths of their students.

Principle 7: No single criterion (e.g., high-stakes testing) should be used to make high school graduation decisions for any individual student.

Principle 8: The state must acknowledge shared accountability for the dropout issue at state, district and local levels by investing the personnel and fiscal resources needed to help schools meet state-established graduation targets. Adequate, equitable funding must be allocated to address this crisis.

Principle 9: Any response to the dropout issue must be based on valuing Texas families, educators, communities and students; no response should promote a "deficit model" or blame.