

HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

During the most recent year on record (school year 1995-96), almost eleven thousand (10,812) young Oklahomans quit school without graduating ... nearly ten thousand (9,962) were still children (ages 18 or younger).

About two of every ten students in Oklahoma who start high school as freshmen do not earn a high school diploma. Most drop out of school in the tenth grade.

Even though the rate of children (under age 19) dropping out of high school (grades 9 through 12) improved slightly for the state (from 5.5% to 5.3%) during this past year, rates worsened in more than half (41 of 77) of Oklahoma's counties during the same period.

The worst dropout rate (8.6%) is found in Cotton County; the best (0.0%) is in Dewey County.

During this past year, the proportion of girls failing to finish high school decreased slightly (from 46.2% to 44.7% of all dropouts) as the proportion of boys increased (53.8% to 55.3% of all dropouts).

While non-White children make up less than one-fourth (24.0%) of the child population, they make up more than one-third (36.0%) of all dropouts.



Talking Points:

Youth not completing high school will face severe economic consequences including poverty, little employment opportunity, poor earning ability and the possibility of a lifetime of financial dependence.

Lack of education impacts health and well-being. Dropouts have higher rates of substance abuse than those who complete high school. Smoking is far more common among women who have lower levels of education.

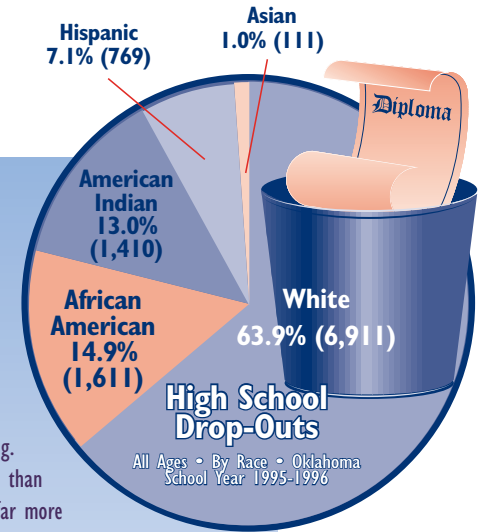
Lack of education is intertwined with crime. In 1996, a majority of Oklahoma inmates were high school dropouts.

Factors which place students at risk of dropping out include teen pregnancy, adolescent fatherhood, poor school performance, substance abuse and behavior problems.

Reading is a key skill. If children can't read well by the end of third grade, their entire school experience is at risk.

Unemployment rates for workers over age 19 is twice as high for dropouts than for graduates.

Children from families whose parents never completed high school or started the family as teens themselves, are more likely to drop out than their peers.



COUNTIES WITH THE TEN HIGHEST DROPOUT RATES SCHOOL YEAR 1995/1996

Close to half (5,092 or 47.1%) of Oklahoma's high school dropouts are from three counties: Oklahoma (2,470 or 22.8%), Tulsa (1,800 or 16.6%) and Cleveland (822 or 7.6%).

