

# Building System Capacity to Improve High School Graduation Rates

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# Overview

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3. The value of systemic reform
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6. Some challenges



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# INTRODUCTION



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## FUNDING

## RESEARCH

## POLICY



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# THE NEED TO ACT



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# 1. The problem is severe

- 30,000 NC ninth graders fail to graduate each year
- 1,000,000+ US ninth graders fail to graduate each year



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## 2. The economic costs are staggering

- Each high school graduate generates \$209,000 in lifetime economic benefits (higher taxes, lower government spending on health, crime, and welfare)



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### 3. The causes are complex

- Student attitudes, behaviors, achievement in high school and prior to high school
  - Engagement
  - Motivation
- Families, schools, communities



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## 4. Current approaches are inadequate

- Rewards and sanctions
- Targeted programs
- Categorical funding



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# THE VALUE OF SYSTEMIC REFORM



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# CDRP Policy Report

*(released February 27, 2008)*

- Policy strategy—pressure and support
- Pressure—modify accountability system, report more useful data
- Support—build capacity of schools, districts, state—rather than implementing programs
- Will improve achievement and other student outcomes
- Improvement requires not just fiscal, but also human and social resources



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# WHAT THE STATE SHOULD DO



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# Role of the State

1. Fix the accountability system in order to maintain pressure and to allow sufficient time to address the problem
2. Collect and report more useful data on dropouts and the state's progress in improving graduation rates
3. Develop high school reform standards and create “lighthouse” districts to implement them in schools with high dropout rates



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# Role of State (continued)

4. Undertake middle school reform
5. Make strategic investments in proven dropout prevention strategies targeting the most disadvantaged students and schools
6. Re-examine state high school graduation requirements



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# Economic benefits of investing in proven interventions

- Five interventions with proven improvements in high school graduation, from pre-school to high school reform
- Each dollar invested in these interventions generates \$2 to \$4 in fiscal benefits
- Other promising interventions and strategies



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## Return on Investments (Federal/State/Local Government) to Raise High School Graduation Rates, Per Graduate

Intervention	Benefit	Cost	Benefit–Cost Ratio	Net Benefit
First Things First	\$168,880	\$37,810	4.47	\$131,070
Chicago Parent-Child Centers	\$168,880	\$47,000	3.59	\$121,880
Teacher Salary Increase	\$168,880	\$63,800	2.65	\$105,080
Perry Pre-school	\$168,880	\$72,370	2.33	\$96,510
Class Size Reduction				
<i>all students</i>	\$168,880	\$131,000	1.29	\$37,880
<i>low-income students</i>	\$168,880	\$80,060	2.11	\$88,820

SOURCE: Clive Belfield and Henry M. Levin (Eds.). *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education* (Washington, D.C. Brookings Institution Press, 2007).



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# WHAT DISTRICTS SHOULD DO



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# Role of School Districts

1. Marshal the will of the district and community to address the dropout problem
2. Adopt proven strategies to keep students in school and support their successful graduation
3. Develop a structured, participatory, and timed process for implementing these strategies in all targeted schools
4. Develop and use data to monitor the implementation of the strategies and to modify the implementation plan
5. Partner with outside support organizations to identify strategies and to develop and monitor implementation



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# The challenges

- Affecting student motivation and engagement from the state capital
- Moving forward in lean budget years
- Learning not just what to do, but learning how to do it well



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[lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts](http://lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts)