



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

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What Will It Take to Turn Around Low Graduation-Rate High Schools?

New Report Identifies Key State, District and School Level Factors for Success

BOSTON, MA (July 22, 2009) — The federal government has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to stimulate significant progress in solving the nation's graduation crisis, according to *Graduating America: Meeting the Challenge of Low Graduation-Rate High Schools*, a new report released today by Jobs for the Future and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University.

"We cannot afford to let the dropout crisis continue – not for our students, our economy, or our future," said U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chair of the House Education and Labor Committee. "It is abundantly clear that ending the dropout crisis in this country is key to creating a lasting economic recovery, improving our competitiveness, and most importantly, changing the future for thousands of students who drop out of school every single day."

While high schools with low graduation rates exist in every state and many communities across the country, they are concentrated in a subset of 17 states that produce approximately 70 percent of the nation's dropouts. Data from these states are used to develop new analytic tools for examining the characteristics of schools, districts, and states that make certain approaches more likely to succeed in certain places.

"The go-it-alone approach of leaving it to failing schools to fix themselves has not worked," said report co-author Robert Balfanz of the Everyone Graduates Center. "With the federal government ready to invest billions of dollars into turning around low-performing schools, the time is right to form the federal-state-local and community partnerships needed to transform or replace the low graduation-rate high schools that drive the nation's dropout crisis."

"To successfully transform or replace low graduation-rate high schools, states and districts need access to the growing knowledge base of what works and where it works," said report co-author Adria Steinberg, of JFF. "It would be a waste of precious resources to quickly scale up interventions that were successful in one place without carefully analyzing the conditions that make success possible, and understanding which innovations work under what circumstances."

"*Graduating America: Meeting the Challenge of Low Graduation-Rate High Schools*" examines three major factors that should be considered when making choices about improvement strategies: patterns of

geographic spread and concentration; state, district, and school characteristics; and socioeconomic, demographic, and political trends in the community.

“With our partners, Jobs for the Future is committed to doubling the number of low-income youth who by 2020 obtain a postsecondary credential after high school,” said Marlene B. Seltzer, president and CEO of JFF. “Turning around the country’s underperforming schools is key to this goal—an outcome that is shared by many in education, business, government, and philanthropy.”

Immediate federal action would make a significant difference in efforts to help hundreds of thousands more high school students earn a diploma and prepare for postsecondary education. The report’s authors make the following recommendations to the federal government:

- Require states seeking ARRA “Race to the Top” funding to use analytic data on graduation rates and low graduation-rate high schools as part of their plans for turning around failing schools.
- Build the capacity of states, districts, and schools to implement appropriate high school reform strategies.
- Designate additional federal innovation funding for development and replication of effective school designs to use in transforming or replacing low graduation-rate high schools.
- Target federal financing to high schools, districts, and states with the most pressing dropout problems.

The 17 states identified in this report are:

Alabama	Florida	Michigan	New Mexico	Ohio	Tennessee
Arizona	Georgia	Mississippi	New York	Pennsylvania	Texas
California	Illinois	Nevada	North Carolina	South Carolina	

To download *Graduating America: Meeting the Challenge of Low Graduation-Rate High Schools*, visit www.jff.org.

About Jobs for the Future

Through research, action, and advocacy, JFF develops promising education and labor-market models that enable American families and companies to compete in a global economy. Across the United States, in partnership with foundations and other national nonprofits, JFF improves the educational and workforce pipelines leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers. Our initiatives take us to 206 communities in 41 states and the District of Columbia.

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About The Everyone Graduates Center

The Everyone Graduates Center seeks to identify the barriers that stand in the way of all students graduating from high school prepared for adult success, to develop strategic solutions to overcome the barriers, and to build local capacity to implement and sustain them. EGC is located in the Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University.

www.every1graduates.org

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