

The Jeff Jenkins Foundation

*Targeted Individual
Recognition & Reward
for At-Risk Students*



To Our Partners and Supporters:

THE PROBLEM:

A great number of us assume that obtaining a high school diploma and the related benefits is an achievement available to everyone in our country. After all, most of us went through the process without any consideration of an alternate course. Unfortunately, this widely held assumption is far from the real truth. While there is some debate about the methods and accuracy of various studies, the following facts are generally accepted as correct by most researchers active in this field.

- ✓ Overall, approximately one in four high school freshmen will not go on to receive a diploma.
- ✓ In many inner city schools with largely African-American student bodies, the number increases to two in four. Nationally about 40% of African-American freshman students will not graduate. Hispanic students fare slightly better with a graduation rate of about 73% while whites graduate 80% of its freshman nationally.
- ✓ A similar problem exists just outside the focus of our program. Of the 75% who graduate and start college, nearly one in four will not return to college after the first year.
- ✓ A study done in 2003 found that our population included 3,500,000 people between ages 16 and 25 did not have a high school diploma and were not enrolled in school.
- ✓ Those who may have a casual awareness of the problem often assume that it is and will continue to correct itself since we are an increasingly sophisticated



society. The truth is that the problem has not improved over the past several decades and in fact, is getting worse.

Our country is experiencing a costly epidemic of high school dropouts. The obvious cost is to the dropouts themselves. Dropouts are much more likely than their peers who graduate to be unemployed, living in poverty, receiving public assistance, in prison, on death row, unhealthy, divorced and ultimately single parents with children who drop out from high school themselves.

- ✓ On average, high school dropouts earn \$9,200 less per year than high school graduates.
- ✓ Dropouts who don't fall victim to the maladies of unemployment, living on welfare, prison as mentioned above and work will earn \$1 million dollars less over the course of a lifetime than a college graduate.
- ✓ High school dropouts are three times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed.
- ✓ They are twice as likely to slip into poverty from year to year.

- ✓ Most studies indicate that college and even high school graduates will experience better health than high school dropouts.

For those isolationists who may feel it is a problem that does not affect them, it is important to point out this issue is creating a profound though less obvious cost to society as a whole. As long as society allows the dropout problem to continue, we are setting in place a situation where these costs to our communities, state and our nation will extend years, even generations into the future.

- ✓ Four out of ten who didn't finish high school receive some type of government assistance.
- ✓ A dropout is eight times as likely to be in jail or prison than a high school graduate.
- ✓ Studies suggest the lifetime cost to our nation for every youth who drops out of school and moves into a life of crime and drugs ranges from \$1.7 to \$2.3 million.

Texas is not doing particularly well with this issue ranking 35th in the list of the 50 states. 366,895 high school freshmen began the 2001 school year. In 2005 only 239,701 teens graduated from high school. How are we allowing more than 127,000 young people in Texas each year to start their lives with such an extreme disadvantage?

WHY DO THEY DROP OUT?

87% of all young people say they want to go to college. Why then, in inner city schools do half of the kids quit high school? There are a variety of types of students and a wide range of reasons for this extraordinary dropout problem. A focus group decided to go to the very source and studied 467 ethnically and racially diverse 16 to 24-year olds who did not complete high school. The findings contradict what many of us would perceive to be the obvious reasons.

- ✓ 88% had passing grades at the time they dropped out.
- ✓ 58% dropped out when they needed just two years or less to complete high school.
- ✓ 70% were confident they could have successfully graduated from high school.
- ✓ 81% recognized that graduating from high school was vital to their success.
- ✓ 74% would have stayed in school if they had it to do over again.



While there is no single reason why students drop out of high school there appear to be clusters of reasons that emerge relating to the academic environment, real life events, a lack of personal motivation and the absence of outside guidance.

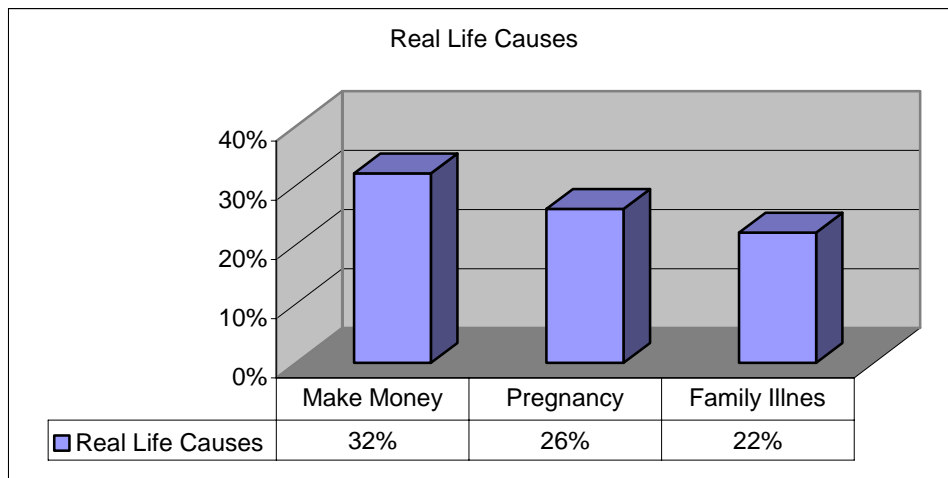
The outlook for improvement in the situation is not good. With primary influences such as modern movies and music videos, young teens often adopt a distorted priority of values. The lust for fast and easy money, sexual promiscuity and material possessions occurs earlier and earlier in a young person's lifecycle. For the most part, these

influences do not point toward education as a valuable achievement or an activity that will provide the rewards they seek. Forcing teens to look at long-term success rather than short-term gratification would enhance the graduation rate.

The top five reasons dropouts identify as major factors for leaving school are:

1. Classes were not interesting (47%)
2. Missed too many days of school and could not catch up (43%)
3. Spent substantial time with people who were not interested in school (42%)
4. Had too much freedom and not enough rules in my life (38%)
5. Was failing in school (35%)

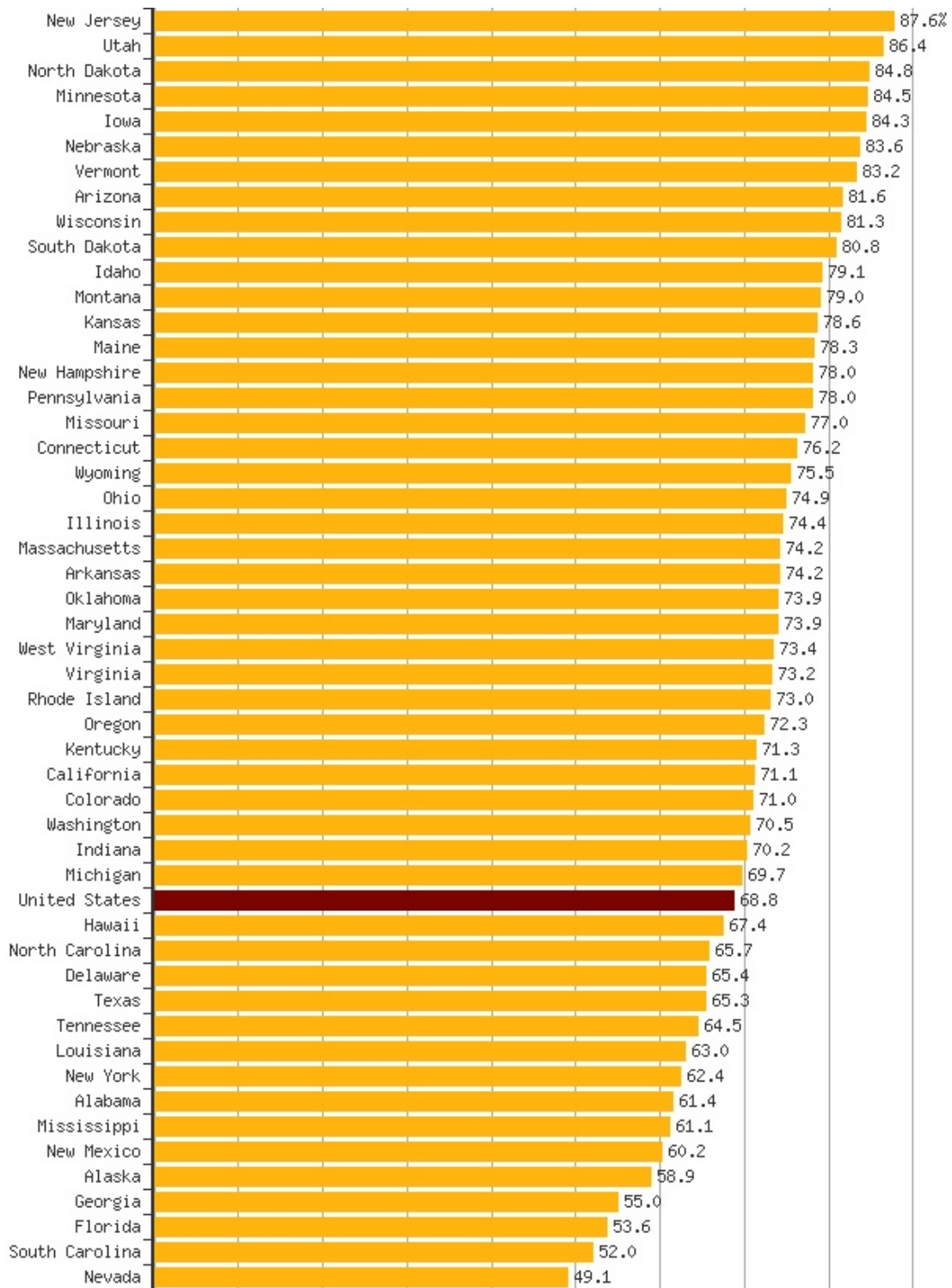
For many students real life events get in the way of graduation.



The chart shows that 32% felt forced to leave school to get a job to earn money for the family. This included 36% of boys and also 28% of girls. While most respondents did cite some school shortcomings, few put the blame for dropping out solely on the school. Most acknowledged only that the school was a contributing factor.

Experts and concerned citizens are not ignoring this problem. The NEA (National Education Association) for example, has issued a twelve-point program to keep our young people in school. As most organizations that have tackled the issue do, the NEA's solutions primarily call for revamping school procedures and policies. It also requests \$10 billion in federal spending. However, one provision recommends reaching out to private organizations such as the Jeff Jenkins Foundation for assistance with programs outlined later in this document.

2006 Graduation Rates by State



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

IS THERE A SOLUTION?

Our belief is that while government, schools, the PTA, the NEA and other interested groups can play an important role, the solution to this problem will be found only at a local and personal level. Dropouts are making conscious, voluntary decisions to leave school for some of the reasons detailed above. Even grandiose government programs with \$10 billion will not quickly or easily change these students' perception that dropping out is a viable solution to their situation.



A high school diploma brings tangible rewards to the student, but a college degree brings even greater rewards including financial, societal and personal success. Furthermore, there is a direct correlation between the level of education our children achieve and the rewards the entire nation reaps when our kids complete their education.

The Jeff Jenkins Foundation believes that any person who chooses to drop out of high school has not recognized the impact these rewards will have on their lives. Moreover, they are often focused on the shorter term perceiving rewards in getting a job, getting married or caring for a sick family member in lieu of finishing school. Therefore the Foundation's program is essentially a program of introducing children to the rewards of education at a younger age and in new and different ways and then continuing to reinforce the students understanding of the financial and societal benefits of education.

In a perfect world, parents would continually demonstrate and reinforce the benefits of education. Unfortunately, the child who grows up in a single-parent, economically distressed household does not as easily perceive those benefits as would a child growing up in a high-end community in a luxury household with parents who are educated professionals. It is imperative that the disadvantaged youth in our country are injected with an outside influence to spur them on to higher achievement.

"I fully understand the enormous pressures that cause nearly half of inner-city high school students to drop out of school."

*"I lived through them
. . . . I survived them."*

- Jeff Jenkins

THE JEFF JENKINS REWARDS PROGRAM

The key to the Jeff Jenkins Recognition and Rewards program can be found in two words from the name; RECOGNITION and REWARD. We accept as fact if students thoroughly understood the huge rewards that would come from his or her commitment to just a few more years of school, the dropout rate would decrease dramatically. Furthermore, we will emphasize social reward (recognition) just as much as financial reward. For example, the high school quarterback who is recognized and admired by the entire student body and often even the community in general because of his athletic prowess is not likely to drop out of high school because he is experiencing the rewards of his accomplishments. At the same time, a student who may have just as much scholastic ability, average grades, who is not involved in extracurricular activities and who spends his out of school time with drop out friends or gang members is at great risk of leaving school.



OUR MISSION IS TO RECOGNIZE AND REWARD SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT, SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND EXTRACURRICULAR EXCELLENCE IN A WAY THAT WILL CHANGE AN AT-RISK STUDENT'S MINDSET AND INSURE THIS CHANGE AND THE RELATED ENTHUSIASM FOR ACHIEVEMENT IS TRANSMITTED TO OTHER STUDENTS, TO TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

**- The Jeff Jenkins Foundation
- Recognition & Reward Program**

We will create a bottom up movement one school at a time. Our system will create publicity to highlight achievements, provide various monetary awards for students and family, host certain celebrity events and promote mentoring relationships with professionals and business and industry leaders. We will insure that the entire school and much of the community will become aware of the students who are recognized and awarded for their efforts. If we are able to achieve quantifiable results in improvement in our first year, in our first school, we will then expand the program in year two to include another high risk school (H. Grady Spruce) with the hopes of being successful there as well. Every year should include growth and expansion until all DFW school districts are being serviced.

We will begin our work in certain high-risk Dallas area school districts. By working with local teachers and community leaders, we hope to grow the movement to include schools across Texas and ultimately across the nation. With literally millions of children dropping out of school, we will never run out of schools with needs.

Our task is to reverse some of the negative trends of the students' daily influences and reprogramming their mindsets to a more mature approach to their lives. In part this will be accomplished by creating an environment in which learning and studying becomes

fun, interesting and even important to them again. Students must be comfortable in pursuing scholastic achievement and not risk ridicule from their peers for such activity. Slowly but surely we are confident that our work will lead to a student attitude that doesn't want to leave, avoid or skip school because school is filled with fun and contains great possibilities for rewards and recognition. Eventually, the students who don't achieve, who are always absent and who purposely detest school and schoolwork will be the outsiders. Unfortunately, in the current environment, it is often just the opposite scenario.

We plan to work closely with teachers and administrators in developing not only the target projects and the proposed programs but to identify high-risk students. Studies have shown that there are a numbers of signs that are common to a student who is close to dropping out of school. Frequent absenteeism, failure to keep up with the class, being held back at least once, low grades, lack of involvement in activities, a serious romantic relationship and substantial personal freedom or a lack of rules in the home. These studies show that parents often engage too late. Many parents only become aware of problems after the child has dropped out of school.

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

South Oak Cliff High School (SOC) in south Dallas is now the first target school of the Foundation. As a part of the ongoing publicity campaign, we will lease or erect a large billboard close to the school that can be viewed from Interstate 35. This billboard will be used to promote activities, feature student accomplishments, highlight faculty or school programs or achievements and generally guarantee the awareness of the Jeff Jenkins Rewards program. The initial billboard display will be the announcement of the program.

Shortly after the beginning of the year, we will present our program at a school assembly. We plan to have one or more high-profile celebrities to bolster student interest and enthusiasm and help create a sense of immediate urgency to succeed at reaching the goals we establish for the students. In order to publicize the program to the community, we will arrange television coverage of the event. At the issuance of the first reporting period of the school year, we will recognize the top five students in each class by featuring them on the billboard including photos. We plan to have an election by the students of the most effective and capable teacher of the first reporting period.

There will be an attendance reward program for each semester whereby any student who achieves a perfect attendance record with absolutely no absences or tardiness will be eligible to receive a cash prize as high as \$5,000.

There will be a separate and exclusive assembly kickoff for seniors. The senior programs will be more serious, the prizes and rewards will be more substantial and the mentor involvement will be greater in an effort to give every senior the best possible push toward a serious commitment to complete college. We will provide or arrange for scholarships for the top ten per cent of the class. For each student graduating in the top two per cent, we plan to provide the ownership or perhaps use of, a new car. If the student is not allowed a car on campus, we believe many families would benefit from the use of the car and the student would still realize the accomplishment in providing a great luxury for his family that came through his or her hard work, dedication and achievement. For certain

senior students, we will attempt to establish internships with prospective employers. Our team of associates have many contacts and relationships in the business community. Many of these executives and professionals have expressed an interest in helping with our program by mentoring a student.

Naturally, there will be stringent requirements and demands on students if they are to benefit from our programs. In many ways, these programs will help student hold the teachers accountable. We will explore with the school administration and the teachers' union the most appropriate method of reward for the students' choice of 'Teacher of the Year.' Our hope would be to award a cashier's checks totaling \$50,000 to be split between teacher and principal or perhaps a new luxury car and prepayment of any associated income tax liability.

Obviously, if we are to really make a difference in this school with these students, it will be imperative that we have the full cooperation and enthusiasm of the faculty and the administration. We will begin lobbying these groups prior to the beginning of the school term in order that they are enthusiastically on board by the time we host our first assembly. A large cash bonus for 'Teacher of the Year' should provide great incentive for teachers to make every effort to excel for the entire school year.



Follow up assemblies will be held on a regular basis. If we can conform our plans to school rules, we hope to stage events that are motivational. We will likely ask various celebrities to speak. We will also seek informational speakers such as executives from recognizable company names in the business community and representatives from a variety of unique professions. Our senior students will receive some preferential treatment in most of these events

including one-on-one question and answer sessions and follow up opportunities.

METHODS AND SOURCES

Some of these incentive programs would outstrip the Foundation's ability to adequately perform without the Foundation's sponsors. We will be seeking sponsorships from many segments of the city including some of the professional sports organizations. Teens will strongly identify with the professional athletes and their words will carry an importance above that which is possible from most other advisors in their lives. Similarly, an executive group from Tandy Corporation, Dell Computers or any of the high profile Texas-based businesses would be a positive and unexpected force in a typically more-ignored school such as South Oak Cliff High School. We will also seek participation from the city of Dallas. If we achieve the recognition we expect, it is likely we will be able to schedule appearances and talks from various politicians including the Mayor, State Legislators, Congressional Representatives, Senators and perhaps at some point, the Governor. When it becomes apparent something important and unusual is happening at certain Dallas inner-city schools, most politicians will be eager to learn and eager to become involved.



PLEASE JOIN US!

We desperately hope you will join us in this historic effort. The success of the Jeff Jenkins Foundation's Recognition and Reward program will change the lives of students, their families and their unborn children. As you read in a previous section, rescuing just one person from the clutches of a gang could save our society an estimated \$2 million. More importantly, a life could be redirected from gangs, drugs, addiction, prison and failure to a successful career and creation of an important and spiritual family unit. Furthermore, these young people will know, understand and appreciate your efforts. Your participation will be remembered for a lifetime. With the number of students we expect to change, your efforts will be remembered in and for several lifetimes.

Our goals cannot be achieved without the support of many different individuals and sponsors. We have some talented and accomplished people ready to tackle this momentous project. But without the moral, physical and financial support of sponsors our efforts will fall short of the goals we hope to achieve.

Please make plans to join us in this effort. Your interest, input, participation and fellowship are eagerly anticipated and will be greatly appreciated by me, all of those associated with the Jeff Jenkins Foundation and by the students whose lives will be forever changed.

I am eager to begin planning our projects together.

My belief and commitment to this program and the positive changes it can bring to a school, a community and the nation are such that I am initially funding the program personally in order to insure that we get it started in fall semester of 2008. Please join me by pledging your sponsorship support!

- Jeff Jenkins

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1. Civic Enterprises Association
2. Peter D. Hart Research Associates
3. Economic Policy Institute
4. National Education Association (NEA)
5. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Further factual information and more detailed source information may be obtained from The Jeff Jenkins Foundation.