

Achievers For Life

The Dropout Crisis

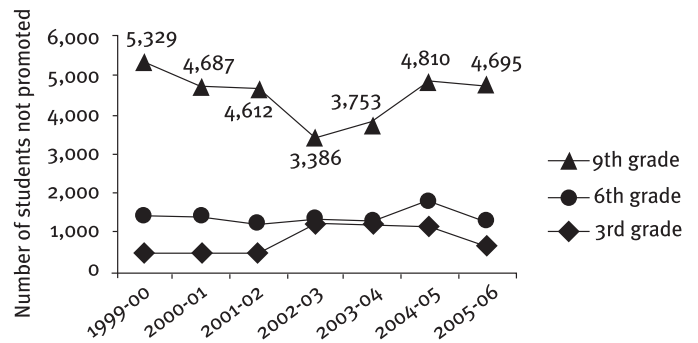
Nearly one-third of all ninth graders in the U.S. fail to finish high school within four years. While it is not known how many will go on to earn a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), it is clear that their lifetime earnings will be less than those of students who graduated from high school. According to 2002 data provided by the U.S. Census, dropouts will earn \$270,000 less than high school graduates over their working lives. A young adult without a high school diploma or GED cannot continue his or her education, or enter the military.

Locally the number of students who dropped out of high school in Duval County last year would fill the Florida Theatre twice. That is almost double the state rate according to research by JCCI. After thoroughly researching the local drop out issue it has become clear that at-risk children have poorer academic and life outcomes. They are more likely to be arrested, live in poverty and experience mental and physical health problems later in life, and are three times as likely to receive public assistance as adults.

The causes of dropping out are interrelated and the process of dropping out occurs over a long period of disengagement from school. Students are frequently retained in third, sixth, and ninth grades which are critical grade transitions. Research indicates that high school is too late to prevent students from dropping out and that early intervention is critical.

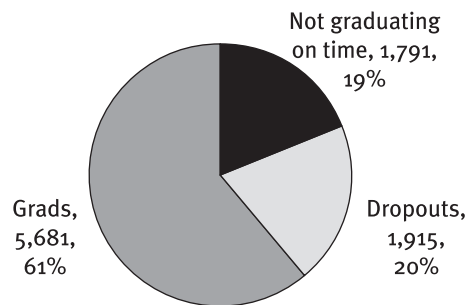
With these facts in mind, United Way has developed a new and innovative model known as **Achievers For Life**. In Partnership with local social service providers, United Way provides support for Achievers For Life at four Duval County middle schools feeding into Terry Parker and Andrew Jackson High Schools with 6th grade students who are at-risk for academic failure. Achievers For Life provides support to both students and their families with access to social services and focused academic assistance. The progress of these middle school students will be followed from 6th grade into their 7th and 8th grade years. The four middle schools also work to identify obstacles that prevent parents from being fully engaged in their student's academic lives. The short term goal of this initiative is to decrease the number of 6th graders retained in these middle schools. The long term goal is to increase the graduation rate and decrease the dropout rate at the high school level.

Non-promoted students by grade level, DCPS, 2000-2006



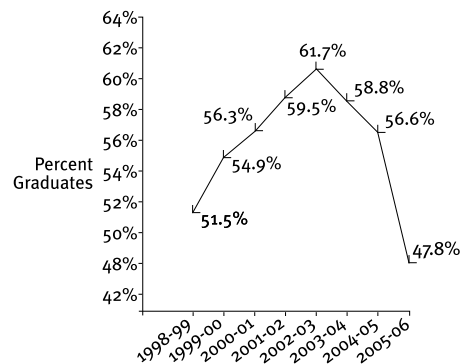
Source: "Non-Promotions in Florida's Public Schools," Florida Department of Education, <http://www.firn.edu/doe/eias/eiaspubs/briefs.htm> ; Florida School Indicators Report, <http://data.fldoe.org/fsir/>

Duval County Public Schools - Students Completing High School in Four Years



Source: Florida Department of Education

Terry Parker Graduation Rate, 1999-2006



Source: Florida School Indicators Report, <http://data.fldoe.org/fsir/>