

SCHOOL DROPOUTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM



TASK FORCE TO STUDY HIGH SCHOOL
DROPOUT RATES OF PERSONS IN THE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

DECEMBER 2012

THE BOTTOM LINE: WHAT DO DROPOUTS COST US?



\$427 MILLION TO INCARCERATE THE 12,000 DROPOUTS IN ADULT PRISON IN 2011.

\$193 MILLION ANNUAL TAX REVENUES LOST DUE TO DECREASED WORK PRODUCTIVITY OF DROPOUTS.

\$160 MILLION IN CRIME-RELATED COSTS SAVED IF THERE WERE A 5% INCREASE IN MALE GRADUATION RATES.

\$74.6 MILLION IN 2011 TO DETAIN 432 JUVENILES.

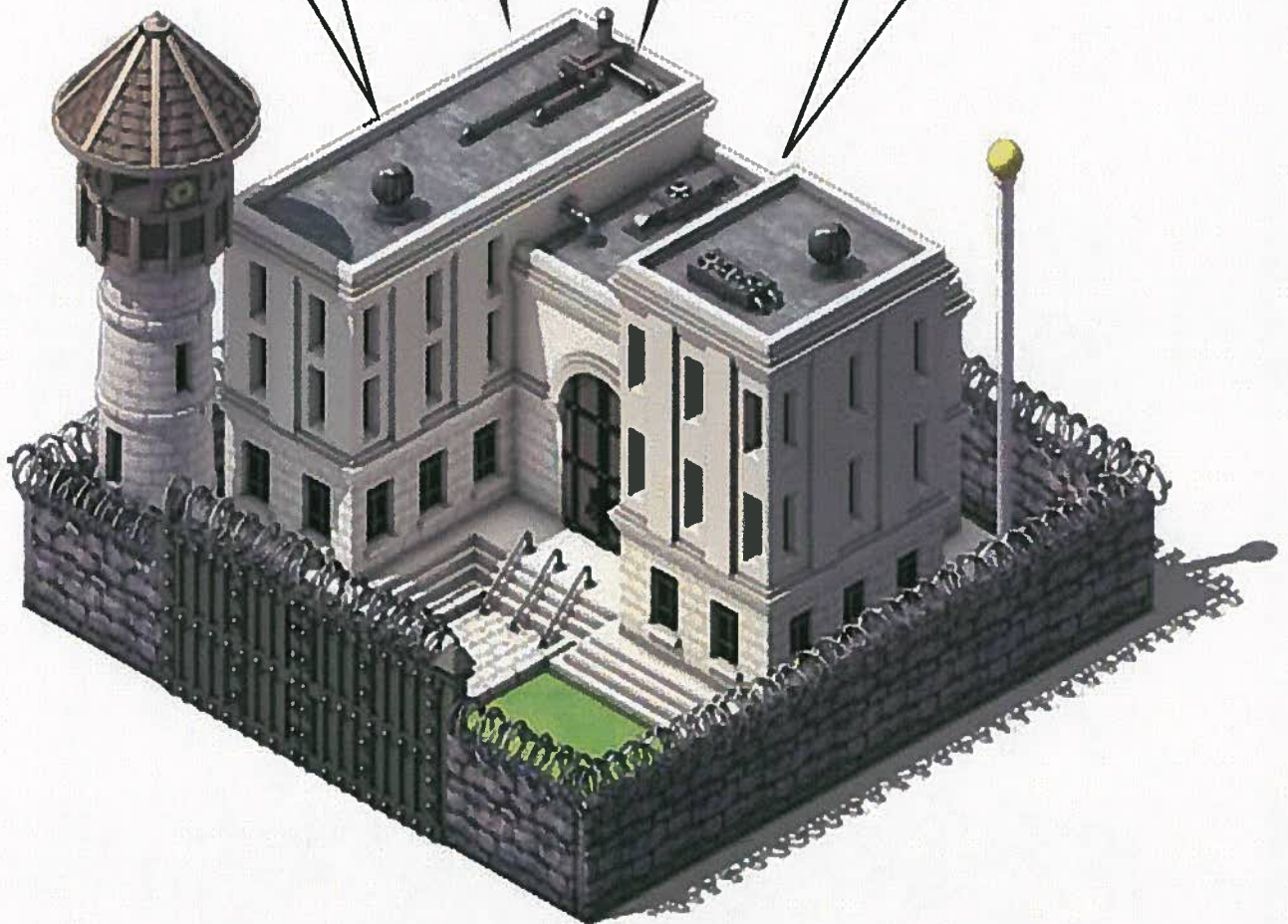
TROUBLING DROPOUT STATISTICS

42.5% OF DROPOUTS (2007-2011) ENTERED THE MARYLAND JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

57.2% OF ADULT OFFENDERS UNDER THE AGE OF 25 IN MARYLAND PRISONS IN 2011 WERE DROPOUTS.

IT COSTS \$172,757 PER YEAR TO DETAIN ONE JUVENILE.

IT COSTS \$34,842 TO INCARCERATE A PRISONER PER YEAR.



DROPOUT ALARM BELLS

READING

23% OF BELOW-BASIC THIRD GRADE READERS WILL LIKELY DROP OUT OF SCHOOL.

15% OF THIRD GRADERS IN MARYLAND WERE NOT PROFICIENT READERS IN 2011.



SUSPENSIONS

80% OF BALTIMORE CITY SIXTH GRADERS WHO WERE SUSPENDED THREE OR MORE TIMES DID NOT GRADUATE.

HIGH LIKELIHOOD OF JUVENILE JUSTICE CONTACT FOR STUDENTS SUSPENDED OR EXPELLED MULTIPLE TIMES.

CHRONIC ABSENTISM

STUDENTS WHO ARE CHRONICALLY ABSENT HAVE A 28.6% PROBABILITY OF GRADUATION.

11% OF MARYLAND STUDENTS ARE CHRONICALLY ABSENT.

11.2% OF STUDENTS IN THE 2011 COHORT DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL.

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I. Executive Summary

In 2011, the Maryland General Assembly created the Task Force to Study High School Dropout Rates of Persons in the Criminal Justice System. The Governor, the Speaker of the House, and the President of the Senate appointed the members of the Task Force which was directed by statute to:

- compile high school dropout statistics of persons in the criminal justice system;
- conduct a study of the fiscal impact of dropouts on the criminal justice system;
- make recommendations on:
 - how students could be kept in high school until they graduate;
 - the availability of continuing education options for incarcerated person who do not have a high school diploma;
 - how individuals can be informed of alternative high school education or work-related programs.

The dropout problem and its relationship to societal ills has been studied frequently and for decades. From state and national studies it is known that dropping out of school has serious negative consequences for both the student and for society. The Maryland State Board of Education reported in July 2012 that, on average, approximately 8,800 students drop out of school per year in Maryland.¹

- Dropouts are more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.
- Students who drop out of school often end up in the adult criminal justice system.

When dropouts end up in adult prison, they cost Maryland taxpayers over \$400 million per year to incarcerate.

The failure to fix the dropout problem will continue to cost the State of Maryland millions of dollars. If saving taxpayers' money was our only incentive to fix the dropout problem, that would be enough, but other important incentives also exist. The contributions that career ready students who graduate college can make to Maryland and to this country will improve our economy and add to the health and welfare of our communities. Every student who stays in school is more likely to be a positive factor for society than a student who drops out of school. Every incarcerated person who obtains a high school diploma, or even better, college credits, has a better chance to be a productive member of our community. Since the rewards for fixing the dropout problem are so high, this Task Force Report presents a call for action to Marylanders to work with a dedicated and unflinching purpose to reduce the dropout rate.

This report includes three examples of effective dropout prevention programs in the public school systems of St. Mary's County, Washington County, and Baltimore City. There are also effective programs in other school systems statewide that work to stem the tide of dropouts. Despite the successes of these aforementioned programs and others throughout the state in

¹ A dropout is a student who, for any reason other than death, leaves school before graduation or the completion of a Maryland approved education program and is not known to have enrolled in another school program. COMAR 13A.08.01.08(c).

dropout prevention, more work must be done. Collectively, the Task Force came up with the following goal for Maryland that will be addressed throughout the entire report.

GOAL: Reduce the dropout rate to 6% or less by 2015-2016 and, thus, increase its graduation rate statewide to 94%.

This goal is directed not only to educators, but to all the agencies that touch our students, or who work with those who drop out of school, including those who are in the juvenile justice system or adult prison. This report outlines some of the ways the state can achieve this goal. Specific examples are highlighted below:

Agency/Partner	Recommendations
Local school systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-examine how dollars are invested in dropout prevention • Track dropout reduction statistics • Compare reduction numbers to financial investment on education • Identify and adopt more successful programs • Ramp up their focus on third grade reading level as a risk factor for dropping out • Seek appropriate ways to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions • Assess the impact of discipline on minority students • Place more emphasis on chronically absent students as a risk factor for dropping out
Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate the use of early warning indicators (third grade reading level, number of suspensions, numbers of days absent etc.) • Help local school systems reduce suspensions and expulsions for non-violent conduct • Identify and publicize evidence-based dropout prevention programs • Explore vocational education options for students indentified on the dropout track
Department of Juvenile Services (DJS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a linkage with all school systems in the state to get juveniles re-enrolled in school quickly after leaving a DJS facility • Continue to work with the local school systems and MSDE to improve the coordination of educational services to students in the juvenile justice system
Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation (DLLR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to increase access to the GED for all populations • Increase the number of GED completions by 10% by 2015
Department of Public Safety & Correctional Services (DPSCS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track cost savings for every inmate who receives a GED in prison and does not recidivate • Allocate appropriate cost savings to DLLR to provide more correctional education • Look for options to expand the availability of entrepreneurial programs for inmates
Governor and the State of Maryland	Allocate the financial resources to develop and sustain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropout prevention programs • Programs designed to improve the educational opportunities for juvenile offenders and adult inmates
Parents/Caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your children attend school everyday

II. How the Dropout Problem Affects Maryland Today

A. High School Dropouts and Criminal Behavior

Research shows a positive correlation between high school dropouts and criminal acts committed. A study conducted in California found that high school dropouts were between two and eight times more likely than high school graduates to be incarcerated (Belfield and Levin, 2007). In addition, at the national level, approximately 75% of America's state inmates, 60% of federal inmates, and 70% of jail inmates did not complete high school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006). Various criminologists have tried to explain the theory behind this positive relationship. Consider the following:

- Individuals who have high school diplomas or earn higher wages through legitimate work will reduce an individual's perceived need to commit a crime and the potential gain of the crime committed (i.e., getting caught vs. being incarcerated).
- The stigma of a criminal conviction may be greater for professional workers who tend to have higher levels of education compared to workers with less pay and less skill.
- More time spent in the classroom may instill values opposed to criminal actions.
- Criminal behavior that begins during youth can continue into adulthood; keeping adolescents in the classroom and off the streets may decrease later criminal activity.

(Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006)

B. General Economic Impact

The economic impact of Maryland's high school dropouts is significant. According to *The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and Maryland Public Policy Institute*, October 2008:

- Every high school class of dropouts will cost Maryland taxpayers \$42 million per year.
- Maryland's high school dropouts earn approximately \$10,000 less annually than high school graduates and \$150,000 less than high school graduates over a lifetime.
- High school dropouts reduce Maryland's tax revenues by \$193 million per year.
- Dropouts have poorer health and are more likely to use Medicaid.

While high school dropouts affect all sectors of the Maryland economy, the purpose of this Task Force is to study the fiscal impact of high school dropouts on the criminal justice system.

C. High School Dropouts Statistics in the Maryland Criminal Justice System

For the purpose of this Task Force, high school dropout statistics were gathered to measure:

1. The percentage of inmates in 2011 under the age of 25 who dropped out of high school.

2. The percentage of high school dropouts over the past five years under the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) supervision.

1. Inmates Under the Age of 25 Who Dropped Out of High School

There were 3,098 offenders 25 years old or younger who were incarcerated in Maryland’s Department of Corrections at some point during 2011.² MSDE had records on 2,195 (70.9%) of these offenders. Of the 2,195 offenders, almost 43% were high school dropouts (i.e., students who withdrew from school), while another 32% were students who “transferred to another institution.” Only 17% graduated from high school; whereas, 8% were still enrolled in the public school system.

Of the 707 inmates who, when they left school, were “transferred to another institution,” 318 (45%) were transferred to the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). Although those students were technically and legally not coded as dropouts, COMAR 13A.08.01.08(C)(3)(d), the reality is that many of them never return to their public school to graduate. Therefore, for our purposes, these individuals were counted them as dropouts. Thus, the number of high school dropouts among the 2011 inmate sample (i.e., students who withdrew or transferred to DJS) was 1,255 (57.2%) of the inmates.

<i>Table 1. High School Education Status of 2011 Maryland Inmates 25 years and younger (n = 2,195)</i>		
Education Status	Number	Percent
High School Dropout	1,255	57.2
Transferred	389	17.7
Completed	375	17.1
Still Enrolled	176	8.0
Total	2,195	100.0

Of the 1,255 inmates who dropped out of high school, the most common reason for leaving was a lack of interest (36.8%), followed by a transfer to DJS (25.3%), whereabouts unknown (15.9%), academic reasons (12.0%), and behavior problems (4.2%).

² Pursuant to an MOU with confidentiality provisions, DPSCS provided a list of all offenders (i.e., ages 25 and under) who were incarcerated in 2011. The purpose of this methodology was to take a snapshot – a point in time – of the inmate population and capture the educational level of each inmate who attended public school in Maryland. This list was extracted and subsequently sent to MSDE to provide the most recent exit status (i.e., completion, transfer, or withdraw) for each offender. Exit status records maintained by MSDE for students date back only to 2007, which is why only offenders under the age of 25 were chosen for this analysis.

Table 2. 2011 Maryland Inmates 25 years and younger who dropped out of high school (n = 1,255)		
Reason	Number	Percent
Lack of Interest	462	36.8
Transferred to DJS	318	25.3
Whereabouts Unknown	199	15.9
Academic	151	12.0
Discipline or Expulsion	53	4.2
Court Action	52	4.1
Special Cases	11	0.9
Employment	7	0.6
Immaturity	1	0.1
Parenting	1	0.1
Total	1,255	100.0

2. High School Dropouts Under DJS Supervision Over the Past 5 Years

From 2007 - 2011, there were 43,308 high school dropouts reported in the Maryland public school system (roughly 8,662 per year)³. From this total, DJS obtained a match on 18,413 (42.5%) of these dropouts, meaning those individuals were processed through the juvenile justice system at some point during their juvenile life.

Table 3. 2007 – 2011 Maryland High School Dropouts DJS Involvement		
DJS Client	Number	Percent
Yes	18,413	42.5
No or Unknown	24,895	57.5
Total	43,308	100.0

D. The Fiscal Impact of High School Dropouts on the Maryland Criminal Justice System

The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, which includes the Division of Correction, Community Supervision, and the Division of Pre-trial and Detention Services, has a 2013 fiscal year budget of \$1.286 billion. Currently, there are approximately 21,500 incarcerated inmates in Maryland and 54,000 individuals under community supervision on parole or probation. DPSCS also books approximately 60,000 offenders annually.

Based on the statistics in *Table 1*, indicating that 57% of Maryland’s 2011 inmates age 25 years or younger were high school dropouts, it was forecasted that roughly 12,255 inmates who

³ Pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding including confidentiality provisions, MSDE provided a list to DJS of all high school dropouts in their database over the past 5 years (2007 through 2011). These names were then matched to determine how many of these individuals are currently or were previously supervised by DJS at some point during their juvenile life.

are currently incarcerated are high school dropouts. The average annual cost of incarcerating an offender in Maryland is \$34,842. That equates to nearly \$427 million per year spent incarcerating offenders who were high school dropouts. Furthermore, the average sentence length is 15.65 years. Thus, it costs Maryland's taxpayers nearly \$6.7 billion to incarcerate offenders who were high school dropouts over the duration of their sentences. This conservative estimate does not even account for the costs of recidivism. High school dropouts run a higher risk of recidivism which increases incarceration, parole, and probation costs (Sum, Khatiwada, and McLaughlin, 2009).

Applying the same 57% threshold to offenders on community supervision, it was estimated that roughly 34,200 offenders on parole or probation in Maryland do not have a high school diploma or a GED equivalent. An annual supervision cost per client in Maryland is \$1,357, which equates to an annual cost of over \$46.4 million to supervise offenders who were high school dropouts.

It is even more expensive to incarcerate juveniles. The average annual detention costs per juvenile are \$172,757. There are currently 432 youth in a juvenile detention facility in Maryland. Youth who are convicted of an offense, *i.e.*, adjudicated and transferred to a juvenile detention center are counted as dropouts. There is an annual cost of close to \$74.6 million to detain youth who have dropped out of high school. In addition, it costs approximately \$56.5 million a year to supervise 7,500 youth in the community through pre-court, probation, aftercare, or intensive GPS supervision.

Unfortunately, these estimated costs do not include expenses related to the actual crime committed, such as property or medical damage and restitution for the crime victims. However, using an economist equation created by Lochner & Moretti (2004), it was determined in 2006 that a 5% increase in the male graduation rate in Maryland would save the State over \$160 million a year in crime-related costs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006). This equation took into account a reduction in crimes committed, the average cost of various crimes, as well as the arrest and incarceration costs for those crimes.

Compare all those costs to the cost of educating a student in 2010-2011 in Maryland's public school system. The combined State and local education budget in Maryland in FY 2010 was approximately \$10.6 billion to educate over 850,000 students. (MSDE Fact Book, 2010-2011 at 20.) The average annual per pupil cost ranges from \$15,729 (Worcester County) to \$11,354 (Caroline County). (MSDE Fact Book, 2010-2011, pg. 25).

III. Stemming the Tide of Dropouts: Early Warning Indicators

There are early warning indicators that a student is entering the dropout path. More specifically, there are three indicators most often identified in the research as early warning indicators: the inability to read proficiently by third grade, multiple suspensions from school, and poor attendance.⁴

A. *Inability to Read Proficiently By the End of Third Grade*

Research and findings from more than thirty years ago suggested that children who are not proficient readers by the end of third grade are less likely to graduate than students who are proficient third grade readers (Lloyd, 1978). The data from the *Double Jeopardy* report (2011) confirms the connection between third grade reading skills and dropping out:

- One in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade does not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers.
- The rates are highest for the low, below-basic readers: 23 percent of these children drop out or fail to finish high school on time, compared to 9 percent of children with basic reading skills and 4 percent of proficient readers.

It is no mystery why reading proficiently by the end of third grade has such a profound effect on a student's ability to succeed in school and ultimately graduate. This language is taken from the *Early Warning* Annie E. Casey Foundation report (2011).

Reading proficiently by the end of third grade (as measured by NAEP at the beginning of fourth grade) can be a make-or-break benchmark in a child's educational development. Up until the end of third grade, most children are *learning to read*. Beginning in fourth grade, however, they are *reading to learn*, using their skills to gain more information in subjects such as math and science, to solve problems, to think critically about what they are learning, and to act upon and share that knowledge in the world around them.

⁴ These indicators are based on the research conducted by Civic Enterprises and The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University published in November 2011, "*On Track for Success: The Use of Early Warning Indicators and Intervention Systems to Build a Grad Nation*" Also, research compiled by the Annie E. Casey Foundation published in two 2011 reports, "*Early Warning: Why Reading By the Third Grade Matters*" and "*Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation.*" Lastly, the Task Force used The Baltimore Education Research Consortium's work in this report. It identified sixth grade early warning indicators including:

- Chronic absence (defined as missing 20 or more days of school);
- Failing English, or math, or both and/or a failing average for English math, science and social studies;
- Being at least one year overage (suggesting an earlier retention); and
- Being suspended for three or more days.

The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) assesses reading proficiency beginning in third grade. The 2011 MSA results for third and fourth graders tell us that statewide 15% of our students (approximately 9,000 students) are not proficient readers when they leave third grade and enter fourth grade, and 10% of our fourth graders (approximately 6,000 students) are not proficient readers as they move to fifth grade (MSDE, 2010-2011).

Percentage of Students Proficient in Reading on
MSA 2011 3rd Grade and 4th Grade by County

System	3rd	4th
Statewide	85.1	90.3
Allegany	86.4	89.4
Anne Arundel	89.9	92.9
Baltimore City	69.4	73.2
Baltimore County	87.9	91.0
Calvert	90.6	94.1
Caroline	81.4	90.0
Carroll	87.7	93.7
Cecil	87.1	90.6
Charles	82.1	88.3
Dorchester	73.6	78.6
Frederick	91.4	94.2
Garrett	86.1	92.5
Harford	87.3	92.0
Howard	92.2	94.4
Kent	80.5	84.7
Montgomery	89.3	92.0
Prince George's	79.1	82.8
Queen Anne's	92.7	> 95.0
St. Mary's	85.4	90.9
Somerset	79.0	89.0
Talbot	84.8	84.6
Washington	81.6	89.1
Wicomico	84.4	88.5
Worcester	>95.0	>95.0

Using the third grade reading early warning indicator puts us on track to solving the dropout problem.

It is recommended that local school systems ramp up their focus on third-grade reading as they systematically implement their dropout prevention programs.

B. Frequent or Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions

The Annie E. Casey Foundation reports “Not surprisingly, students with relatively low literacy achievement tend to have more behavioral and social problems in subsequent grades

(*Early Warning*, pg 9). Just as night follows day, behavioral problems lead to suspensions and expulsions.

In 2010, the Maryland State Board of Education began a study of school discipline. It learned that frequent suspensions or several long-term suspensions increase the likelihood of a student dropping out of school. See “*Report to the Maryland State Board of Education on the Provision of Educational Services to Long-Term Suspended and Expelled Students* (August 2010, pg. 13-14). This document cites numerous studies that show:

- Suspensions and expulsions are a major factor leading to a decision to drop out.
- Students who manage to get reinstated after a period of suspension may not be able to advance to the next grade with their peers, increasing the likelihood that they will drop out.

Similarly, Johns Hopkins’ researchers identify “two or more mild or serious behavior infractions” as an early warning indicator for dropping out of school (*On Track for Success*, pg.13). The Baltimore City Public Schools study, “*Destination Graduation*,” cites being suspended for three or more days as a dropout indicator. That study states:

Being suspended for three or more days was a strong indicator of eventual dropout. Interestingly, receiving any out-of-school suspension in sixth grade was not a strong enough predictor of eventual dropout to be classified as an Early Warning Indicator. However, using the number of days suspended in this measure allowed us to capture students who were either multiple time offenders, or committed a single, serious violation of school rules. It was found that of the 18.8 percent of sixth graders suspended three or more days, just 29.4 percent graduated within one year of expected (June, 2008). By contrast, the graduation rate of those with no suspensions in sixth grade was 59.4 percent.

In July 2012, the State Board issued its final report on school discipline, “*School Discipline and Academic Success: Related Parts of Maryland’s Education Reform*.” The Report calls for the reduction of the number of out-of-school suspensions in Maryland schools for apparently non-violent offenses.⁵ In 2010-2011, over 30,000 students were suspended out-of-school for apparently non-violent conduct and over 2,000 of them were suspended for over 10 days.

Since the number and frequency of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions a student experiences is an early warning indicator for risk of dropping out of school, the Task Force strongly supports the State Board’s initiative to work with Maryland school systems to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions especially for non-violent conduct.

⁵ Whether an offense is violent or non-violent is a decision for the school superintendent to make considering all the circumstances surrounding the conduct.

It is recommended that local school systems take a close look at the number of out-of-school suspensions and seek ways, where appropriate, to reduce them.

The State Board Report also called for school systems to provide at least minimum education services to all suspended or expelled students. This requirement, which is designed to keep those students connected to school and learning, is strongly supported by the Task Force.

There is a connection between out-of-school suspensions and expulsions and the likelihood of being involved in the juvenile justice system. A ground-breaking study issued by the Council of State Governments and the Public Policy Research Institution in July 2011, based on a research study of the school population in Texas, reports that connection:

- The results of the first analysis demonstrated that when a student was suspended or expelled for a discretionary school disciplinary violation, this action nearly tripled (2.85 times) the likelihood of juvenile justice contact within the subsequent academic year. Further . . . each additional discretionary encounter increased further the likelihood of juvenile justice involvement.
- Specifically, for those students not disciplined or disciplined once between 7-12 grades, contact with the juvenile justice system was low. Twenty seven percent of students with 6-10 suspensions had involvement with juvenile justice and 46% of those with 11 or more suspensions had a very high level of contact with juvenile justice.

Percent of Students (by Number of Discretionary Disciplinary Actions) With Juvenile Justice Involvement during the Study Period				
All Students in Study Group 928,940				
No Disciplinary Action	1 Minor Involvement	2-5 Repeat Involvement	6-10 High Involvement	11 or more Very High Involvement
380,035 (41%)	122,112 (13.1%)	192,448 (20.7%)	93,685 (10%)	140,660 (15.2%)
2.4%	6.8%	14.7%	27.3%	46.0%
Percent with Juvenile Justice Contact				

The report recognizes that there “will always be some subset of students who cannot abide by school rules and need to be removed from the classroom” (pg. 72). While this is certainly the case, the number of children who cycle through the school disciplinary process should still be reduced.

The Task Force is especially supportive of the effort to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions because of the disproportionate impact of suspensions and expulsions on minority students. As the Maryland State Board of Education reported, of the 66,955 students suspended in 2010-2011 (all suspensions, in and out-of-school), 57% (38,515) were African American. The disproportionate representation of minority students, particularly African-American males, in the population of suspended and expelled students is not a new finding. It was previously documented in the 2007 *Report of the Task Force on the Education of*

Maryland's African American Males. As the State Board explained, that report relied, in part, on data from the 2004-05 school year, when African Americans comprised of 59% (42,293) of the 71,085 students suspended (all types of suspensions, in-school and out-of-school). The 2007 Task Force expounded on the implications of its findings:

Twenty-five years of research show not just that African Americans are more often disciplined than White students, but that they're more harshly disciplined, too. And yet numerous studies investigating behavior, race, and discipline have yet to show that African-American students misbehave at a significantly higher rate than others, nor that their misbehavior is more serious. That is, no study to date has found differences in racial behavior sufficient to explain racial differences in school punishment.

More and more, researchers are looking to institutional procedures such as those regarding discipline to explain the difference. Those procedures, they're finding, are fraught with an alarming degree of subjectivity and act more as a perpetuator of racial order than an objective arbiter of infraction and penalty. Discipline decisions are often colored by adults' perceptions of a student's appearance, neighborhood, family, and social background – all of which influence their perception of his behavior. In fact, in deciding punishment, the individual adult/student encounter often takes a back seat to racial and societal perceptions in general.

Consider the following statistics from Maryland. It is known that a student who is suspended or expelled often is more likely to drop out of school. Statistics in Maryland seem to support the disproportionate impact of minorities. We know that 42.5% of Maryland students who dropped out of school end up in the juvenile justice system. We know that, in 2011, 85% of those in juvenile detention and 75% of those in juvenile commitment were minorities. We know that 57.2% of inmates in Maryland prisons are dropouts and that 70-75% of them are minorities.

The State Board is leading the effort to eliminate disproportionate impact by directing MSDE to create a statistical model to assess such impact in each school system.

The Task Force joins the State Board and recommends that local school systems assess the impact of their discipline on minority students and reduce that impact if it is disproportionate.

C. Chronic Absenteeism

The relationship between long-term or frequent suspensions and chronic absenteeism is an obvious one. When a student is put out of school for long or frequent periods of time, he/she is absent and on the road to being chronically absent.⁶

⁶ There is no common definition of "chronically absent" in Maryland. Each school system adopts its own measure, usually between 10-20 days per year.

Baltimore City Public Schools has focused extraordinary efforts on attendance research and addressing chronic absenteeism. It has found that chronic absenteeism, (absent more than 20 days a year) is a major factor in a student’s failure to succeed academically. Baltimore City Public Schools has also identified chronic absenteeism as an early indicator for dropping out of school. “The probability of graduation drops from 70.0 percent of students with ten or fewer days absent in sixth grade to 28.6 percent for students who were chronically absent in sixth grade. In other words, the probability of graduation is nearly two and a half times better for a student with ten or fewer absences compared to a chronically absent student. As attendance rates fell, on-time graduation rates dropped as well, down to 13.2 percent for students missing 40 or more days.”

Other studies identify the same connections between chronic absenteeism and dropping out of school. For example, Balfanz & Byrnes (2012) from Johns Hopkins University studied attendance data from six states including Maryland. For five of the six states, the Report sets forth the percentage and number of chronically absent students:

Chronic Absenteeism Rates in Five States

State	Percent Chronically Absent	Number Chronically Absent
Oregon	23% (2009-10)*	129,190
Rhode Island	18% (2010-11)**	30,168
Maryland	11% (2010-11)***	85,188
Florida	10% (2009-10)***	302,382
Nebraska	6% (2010-11)***	18,100

*Missing 10% or more of enrolled school days ** Missing 10% of enrolled school days, for those who attended at least 90 days ***Student absent 21 or more days – of those enrolled all year

This study highlights schools struggling with chronic absenteeism. “In Maryland, for instance, there are 58 elementary schools that have 50 or more chronically absent students; that is, two classrooms of students who miss more than a month of school a year. In high school, where chronic absenteeism is higher, there are 61 schools where 250 or more students are missing a month or more of school.” (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012, pg. 3).

The link between chronic absenteeism and dropping out-of-school is a strong one. Indeed, “analyses of data from multiple states and school districts, many conducted in partnership between the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University and the National Governors Association, have consistently found chronic absenteeism to be among the strongest predictors of dropping out of high school, stronger even than suspensions, test scores,

and being overage for grade, after having controlled for student demographics and backgrounds.” (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012, pg. 25).

Data from Rhode Island and New York City, among other locales, show that at least three-fourths of the students who become involved with the justice system have histories of chronic absenteeism.

Based on this research, it is recommended that parents get their children to attend school every day. It is recommended that local school systems place more emphasis on students who are chronically absent and, if necessary, engage in strong efforts to get those students back in school.

IV. Keeping Students in School

Students will stay in school when it is clear that the school wants them to be there. Using early warning indicators to flag those students who may dropout in the future is one way to give students the sense that a school wants to keep them engaged and learning. Those schools will, among other things:

- start early to identify dropout risks and work to eliminate them;
- emphasize every day to parents and students why it is important for students to come to school;
- teach every student by the end of third grade to read proficiently; and
- find ways to reduce out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for non-violent offenses.

There are many programs that are designed to accomplish these goals. MSDE has compiled a list of dropout prevention programs in its *Dropout Prevention/School Completion Resource Guide*. In the 2012 legislative session, the General Assembly passed SB 362 which, in part, directed MSDE to “update this guide, synthesize the information, and analyze the effectiveness of local programs and services.” The Task Force strongly supports that work, particularly the analysis of the effectiveness of local programs. Below are some examples of effective dropout prevention programs.

A. Effective Programs in Maryland Public Schools

1. St. Mary’s County Public Schools

St. Mary’s County Public Schools (SMCPS) has implemented a program that has reduced the dropout rate and kept students in school to learn. In 2009, after identifying what was preventing students from completing high school, SMCPS decided to shut down failed practices and promote new initiatives to support struggling students. That year, SMCPS closed an alternative learning program, zero-based the staff, and opened as a new academy called Fairlead. Its mission was to enroll 60 rising freshman students identified by their middle school teachers, counselors, and administrators as those most likely to drop out of high school. The Fairlead Academy provided those students with immersive, supported classrooms where they benefited from a 10-to1 student-to-teacher ratio. The classrooms were outfitted with cutting-edge

instructional technologies and professional development was provided to the teachers to maximize its impact. A dedicated counselor worked with students and support services encircled the entire program. There was no magical secret ingredient to this program, just the unflagging belief that all children can and will learn and dedicated staff that refused to give up on kids. In June 2012, the inaugural cohort of the Fairlead Academy posted an 84% “4-Year Adjusted Cohort” graduation rate. When the remaining active students complete their requirements in 2013, the “5-Year Adjusted Cohort” graduation rate will be 90%. Each year SMCPs has added another cohort to the Fairlead Academy and it now serves over 200 students.

Additionally, SMCPs recently entered into a partnership with America’s Promise Alliance and Apex Learning® to provide comprehensive digital curriculum to students at all high schools. Over the course of an anticipated three-year partnership, SMCPs will implement programs for remediation, credit recovery, unit recovery, supplemental courses, Advanced Placement, and summer school. The program at each of the high schools includes a dedicated teacher running a resource room each period of the day where students can complete work, receive tutoring, and monitor their graduation plan. SMCPs is extending the instructional day for students who need additional assistance by running the program four days a week, providing a dedicated computer lab staffed by a certificated math, science, social studies, and English teacher. Transportation is available for students as well.

Fairlead and APEX are just two bright stars in the constellation of achievements garnered by the class of 2012. As a group, they have posted an 89.2% “4-Year Adjusted Cohort” graduation rate – the highest rate ever recorded in St. Mary’s County and 5.5% higher than the previous year’s rate. As Dr. Michael Martirano, Superintendent and member of this Task Force explains, “for the teachers and support staff working in the schools, interacting daily with students, tirelessly supporting their work, and persistently driving our school system forward, this is the greatest validation that what we are doing is working for all of the students of St. Mary’s County Public Schools.”

2. Washington County Public Schools

Another school system in Maryland, Washington County Public Schools, has adopted the philosophy that it should not be easy for a student to drop out of school. Superintendent Clayton Wilcox says that, even as they work to keep students, those who drop out are warmly welcomed back. “It’s not easy to drop out. We’re going to hound you. Classroom teachers are going to talk to you. Principals are going to talk to you. The guidance counselor is going to talk to you. We don’t make it easy.”⁷

Washington County Public Schools employs intervention specialists to work with dropouts to bring them back to school. When they return, the school system offers e-learning classes for credit recovery, evening classes, and a family center where pregnant teens and student parents can attend class. Student attendance and performance data are carefully tracked to identify early, any students at risk. Intervention specialists develop relationships with these students, doing everything from visiting homes to helping them connect with community mental health services.

⁷ <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/46781695/ns/us-news-life>

As a result of this effort, Washington County Public Schools has a 90.4% graduation rate compared to Maryland's statewide graduation rate of 82.8% for the 2011 cohort.

3. Baltimore City Public Schools

In Baltimore City beginning in 2010, juvenile arrests dropped and student graduation rates increased. Dr. Andres Alonso, the school system's CEO, sees a connection between those two facts. He attributes the reduction in dropouts and juvenile arrests to "closer working relationships among agencies that interact with city youths, including police, the school system, juvenile services, and the health department that try to surround at-risk youth with services to keep them out of trouble and off the streets."⁸

The school system works with the health department through a program called Operation Safe Kids to identify youth who are most at risk for committing violence or becoming the victims of violence.⁹ Operation Safe Kids deploys caseworkers to work with the students and their families. Launched in 2002, working with about 350 high risk youth, the Program provides enhanced services such as:¹⁰

- Employment: An Employment Counselor from the Mayor's Office of Employment Development is funded to provide employability and life skills training and to connect youth to summer, after-school, and permanent employment or training and apprenticeship programs that prepare youth for careers.
- Education: An Education Coordinator provides improved educational coordination to clients, particularly those who are overage or chronically truant, in order to ensure youth are in appropriate school placements, prevent disciplinary removals, reduce delinquent behavior, and improve school performance. This individual works closely with the school system and alternative schools.
- Family: The program offers parent groups to provide support and an outlet to share concerns and obtain information related to services for which their child may be eligible.
- Extracurricular Activities: The program sponsors trips and special events to promote positive team building and social skills development.

Baltimore City implemented this multi-pronged approach to reducing youth violence in 2004. The data show that the strategies are working to reduce violence, in part, by keeping students in school (Brash, 2004).

⁸ *In Baltimore More Time Means Less Juvenile Crime*, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2010-11-13/news/bs-ci-dropout-and-crime-rate-20101113_1_juvenile-crime-dropout-rate-ceo-andr-s-alonso

⁹ Juvenile Violence in Baltimore Counties to Decline, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2012-01-09/news/bs-md-ci-juvenile-crime-reductions-20120109_1_juvenile-violence-juvenile-services-juvenile-justice-system

¹⁰ <http://www.baltimorehealth.org/operationsafekids.html>

It is recommended that every school system to re-examine how dollars are invested in dropout prevention and address the following:

- **Track dropout reduction statistics**
- **Compare reduction numbers to financial investment on education**
- **Identify and adopt more successful programs**

B. Vocational Education

One of the ways that was discussed to keep students in school was career and technical education opportunities for students who have early warning indicators for dropping out. Some task force members expressed nostalgia for the old vo-tech programs offering basic skills training. Due to the advances in technology, however, even basic career and technical education courses require higher level skills. According to Katherine Oliver, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Career and College Readiness, at MSDE:

The old vocational education programs which taught simple procedural operations is no longer a viable educational approach to an entry level position that is self, let alone, family supporting. For example, the 21st century auto technician (yesterday's auto mechanic), must understand the mathematics and science that undergird the technology that runs today's automobiles and requires considerable post-high school training. No auto dealer allows a high school auto tech student access to the high performance computers and systems that power today's cars until that student has 18-24 months of training and experience beyond high school.

The old vocational education programs could certainly provide an in-school activity for students but would offer little in terms on the "value-added" of today's career and technical education. This value-added includes the application and extension of mathematics and literacy so that students are ready for the postsecondary education/training that most jobs now require, as well as the technical education needed to earn the industry certifications that document readiness for entry into 21st century occupations.

For at-risk students in our high schools, Ms. Oliver advocates enhanced career guidance and other support services to help them succeed. She adds, "as an aside, the lack of these supports in the criminal justice system are what contribute mightily to the failure rates of well-trained inmates once they leave the institutions."

Due to the fact that so many dropouts say they leave school because of "lack of interest," that the task force agrees that enhancing the career and technical education opportunities would increase student interest in school. For example, Montgomery County Public Schools has a well-

regarded vocational education program at the Thomas Edison High School of Technology in Wheaton. Edison is a public vocational/technical high school that has a range of programs such as automotive technology, design and computer-based technology, building and construction technology, hospitality, and medical services. It provides practical experience to students who want an alternative to the regular high school curriculum. Students apply to Edison and, if accepted, attend the vocational/technical program for a part of the school day and attend their regular school program for the remainder of the day. The option of vocational education is extremely important for students who are interested in a hands-on and career-driven curriculum and helps to keep non-traditional students in school.

Another option that may be viable for our at-risk students is a Career Research and Development (CRD) program that offers students individualized on-the-job preparation after the completion of two in-school courses where students assess work interests, explore careers, and learn job seeking and job keeping skills. The work-based learning placement (overseen by a school system work-based learning coordinator) sometimes involves lower skill positions. Some school systems use this approach for students with an IEP. Traditionally, CRD has been for students with career interests for which there is no appropriate career/technical education (CTE) program of study – or when a CTE program of study is oversubscribed. According to Ms. Oliver, Howard County Public Schools does an excellent job with CRD and Baltimore County Public Schools has an extensive program as well. She concluded with an admonition that is worth remembering every day:

“CTE that prepares students for success in the knowledge economy should be open to any student. Some students just demand more support than others. We need to have high expectations for every student and provide the resources needed to help students achieve them. It’s an injustice to sort kids at the high school level based on our perceptions of what they may not be able to do. I do think many of the youth and adults that are subject of the task force are the victims of society’s low expectations for them.”

It is recommended that MSDE and the local school systems explore vocational education options for those students identified on the dropout track.

V. Diverting Dropouts From The Path to Prison

Even if Maryland reduces its dropout rate by implementing strong dropout prevention programs, there will always be some students who will drop out of school. When a student intends to drop out, each school is required to conduct an exit interview (see COMAR 13A.08.01.07 (E)). This is the school’s last opportunity to reach out to the student and, at the very least, provide him/her with an explanation of the ways the student can complete his/her education. One of the most obvious is the GED. Yet, there are barriers that may make it difficult to obtain a GED. They include the cost of the test which will soon increase from \$45.00 to \$120.00 when the GED becomes a computer-based test. DLLR is seeking resources to mitigate the burden of the cost of computer based testing when it becomes the sole option for GED testing.

Other barriers exist as well. Specifically, in Maryland, when an examinee submits an application for the GED exam, he or she must provide a current form of identification, which can include an official Maryland driver's license, learner's permit, official Maryland ID Card issued by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), or a current Active Duty Military ID card. However, applicants may submit other forms of identification if they meet the criteria established by the National GED Testing Service. If the applicant is 18 years or younger, the application must also include written verification of school withdrawal. By requiring a valid identification, Maryland GED testing centers are able to ensure non-fraudulent examinations, that the examinee has reached the minimum age, and that the examinee is a resident of the state.

Low-income populations may have difficulty obtaining these types of identification. A learner's permit in Maryland costs applicants \$50.00 for a new permit or \$30.00 for a replacement. A driver's license costs applicants between \$20.00 and \$45.00, depending on whether the license is new, a replacement, or needs corrections. To obtain a license, it would cost an applicant a minimum of \$70.00.

One possible solution to alleviate the economic pressures of the GED is to allow alternate forms of identification. The GED Testing Service now allows alternative forms of identification. Allowing low-income individuals to obtain low cost identification cards could also help those without current identification to obtain one. Obtaining a Maryland Identification Card at \$15-20 is one such option.

Undocumented individuals who apply to take the exam may face an additional barrier. The application for the GED in Maryland requests a social security number. Those without a social security number are directed to the GED Testing Service Office of Maryland for alternative procedures. According to that office, people without a social security number can apply to the testing service for a registration number.

Maryland could adopt measures to make access to GED easier for those who were not born in this country. For example, Texas and California permit identification from other countries as valid forms of identification for the purposes of taking the GED. In both states, so long as the individual is able to prove state residency through a bill with a street address within the State, a form of photo identification issued by a foreign county is permissible for acceptance to the examination. These types of identification include a valid current identification card or passport. By accepting these types of identification and not limiting the acceptable forms to those issued through the MVA, the GED would be accessible to a larger population, including low-income individuals and undocumented applicants.

It is recommended that DLLR develop a plan to increase access to the GED for all populations.

VI. Diverting Juvenile Offenders from the Path to Adult Prison

When a dropout enters the juvenile justice system, the long-term consequences are forthcoming. A recent 10-year study of 100,000 juvenile offenders in the United States concluded that students in the juvenile justice system are three times more likely to end up in

adult prison than students who were never a part of the juvenile justice system (Aizer and Doyle, 2011). That is a statistic that compels some action.

An essential way to stem the tide of students dropping out once an individual has become involved in the justice system is to provide appropriate educational services no matter where the juvenile offender is housed. For example, the Montgomery County Correctional Facility (MCCF) provides a model of how to create an excellent educational program within a jail setting that gives options to youthful offenders who are pursuing their high school diploma, GED, and even college level courses. Montgomery County Public Schools provides regular and special education to students at MCCF. This enables students who are 21 years old and younger to continue their education and take many of the same classes they would take at their home school. When they are released from the jail, they can return to their home school without interruption and with a transcript in hand so they can continue in the same classes. This ease of transition helps students stay on track to graduate and limits interruption in their schooling.

The Maryland State Department of Education has now assumed the task of providing educational services in 9 of the 14 residential programs operated by DJS. With MSDE providing the educational programs, there remains a strong connection to the Maryland curriculum and the programs that exist in the local school system. Such programs provide an opportunity for students to stay connected with school. They also allow individuals to reconnect with school if they have dropped out prior to their detention. Educational services provided to youth under DJS supervision include the following:¹¹

- **Education** – As part of a youth's aftercare plan, DJS Case Managers create "transition plans" to help a youth returning to the community transition back to their local community school. A transition plan is developed with the help of local school officials and teachers and focuses on ways to bring a youth back into the educational environment with as little disruption as possible. Once a youth returns to the community and is re-enrolled in his or her local school, DJS Case Managers track the youth's attendance and progress at the school through the Spotlight on Schools Program.
- **Job-Readiness** - More than just learning the skills of a specific trade, DJS youth re-entering the community often must learn basic job skills. These skills include workplace etiquette, proper attire and behavior, and developing positive workplace habits. DJS Case Managers are able to incorporate job-readiness training into aftercare plans in order to give DJS youth the best chance to not only find a job but keep it.
- **Employment** - DJS Case Managers often incorporate vocational training or access to employment opportunities in aftercare planning for DJS youth. There are many programs throughout Maryland that offer training and pre-apprenticeships for various disciplines such as plumbing, electrical, carpentry, food handling and service, construction and basic computer skills. In addition to providing training, these youth job-oriented programs will help youth find jobs in their respective discipline

¹¹ <http://www.djs.state.md.us/education-jobs.asp>

It is recommended that the local school systems, the Department of Juvenile Services, and the Maryland State Department of Education continue to improve current practices within the coordination of services to the students in the juvenile justice system to improve their chances to graduate college, become career ready, and exit the prison pipeline.

Indeed, all those agencies should be helping students in the juvenile justice system to return to school. When a student enters the juvenile justice system, however, the data collection rules in place at MSDE seem to have an unintended consequence. It appears that school systems withdraw those students from their enrollment rolls. Thus, when the student is ready to return to school, he/she must re-enroll. Getting all the enrollment paperwork in place and scheduling the intake meeting delays re-enrollment and results in more days out of school.

The Task Force recommends that DJS work with MSDE to allow these students to be enrolled in school immediately and thereafter complete all the required paperwork.

VII. Increasing Education Opportunities for Those in the Adult Prison System

Maryland is a State that is focused on the value of education. Investment in education is a priority because there is a value in an educated populace and a skilled workforce who do jobs that Maryland businesses need done. It is also important to provide these same educational opportunities for adults who are incarcerated.

Indeed in 2006, the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, along with others, touted the value of education programs in prison in "*College for the Incarcerated: Funding Alternatives for Maryland Post-Secondary Correctional Education.*" They reviewed the research and literature on the topic and, not surprisingly, found that investing in the education of incarcerated individuals yields strong returns. The Report reflects some of that return on investment:

- A 2004 study conducted at UCLA postulates that every \$1 million spent on correctional education prevents close to 600 crimes.
- A 2001 study conducted by the Correctional Education Association of 3,000 prisoners in Maryland, Minnesota, and Ohio showed a 29% decrease in re-incarceration rates for those who participated in post-secondary correctional education.
- Drop in recidivism rates saves taxpayers approximately \$24,000,000.
- Rate of return on every correctional education dollar spent is approximately 200%.

Those same points remain relevant today. For those who are in prison, educational opportunity is the path to avert future returns to prison. High on our list of educational opportunities are adult literacy programs and the GED program. The Montgomery County Correction Facility is again a good example. It has an adult education program including adult basic education classes and GED-level classes so students have a choice whether they want to pursue a high school diploma or GED. Beyond high school level course work, MCCF collaborates with Montgomery College to provide workforce-related certificate classes. In the

coming year, credit classes and academic counseling will be added to provide a bridge to college for the students.

A. Adult Literacy in Prison

Before anyone can obtain a GED, he/she must be able to read and write. Maryland's adult literacy programs, administered by the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, are designed to help adults become literate and complete secondary school education. In fiscal year 2012, DLLR provided educational services to 8,023 inmates with a budget of approximately \$9.33 million. The Maryland Correctional Education Academic Programs, through DLLR, offers a full learning continuum for students. Instruction is provided to inmates from the beginning levels of instruction in mathematics, reading, and writing to high school completion. Classes are organized into six different instructional levels based on student skill levels. The following are descriptions of the individual courses skill level requirements and curriculum.

Beginning Literacy

Students who have no or very minimal skills begin at this level. Their skills are developed to the equivalent of a second grade student. Class instruction includes learning the skills of new readers and very basic math skills of addition and subtraction. Writing is at the sentence level.

Basic

Students who have developed beginning level skill continue to develop reading, math, and writing skills. At this level students are able to do addition, subtraction, multiplication, and easy division. Phonic and decoding skills are learned in Reading. Writing focuses on writing multiple sentences about the same topic. Their skill level is equivalent to second and third grade level skills.

Intermediate Low

Students at this level are learning the skills equivalent to grades four and five. Skills and knowledge developed allow students to read a variety of materials, such as newspapers. Writing a paragraph is learned. Math skills include fractions and beginning decimals.

Intermediate High

Students at this level are learning the skills of the equivalent to grades six through eight. Skills continue to be developed and the knowledge and skills allow the student to read, compute, and write efficient enough to enter a high school level curriculum. Writing a simple essay is learned. Reading skills build on critical reading and comprehensive skills. Math refines decimals and begins geometry.

Adult Secondary Education Low

Students at this level are beginning to prepare for the GED Test and have the skills equivalent to a ninth to tenth grade student. Social Studies and Science are introduced as a skill area emphasis. Writing a specialized essay to persuade or prove a point is learned. Students are introduced to algebra, higher level geometry, and basic probability.

Adult Secondary Education High

Students at this level are preparing to take the GED Test. Skills are being refined and the knowledge and skills of eleventh to twelfth grade are included at this level. The content areas of Social Studies and Science are refined. Reading in the content areas is the set of skills refined. Writing a research paper is learned. Higher level mathematics is taught including statistics and probability, integers, exponents, and move advance algebra. The content is designed to meet the state standards for graduation.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Instruction is provided as needed for those whose native language is not English. ESL classes help students develop speaking, listening, reading, writing, and grammar skills necessary to communicate English effectively within their workplaces, communities, and families.

B. GED Programs in Prison

In Maryland, passing the GED allows any person to receive a Maryland High School Diploma. GED programs in prison are critical to helping an inmate succeed when he/she is released from prison. GED programs in prisons seem to be underutilized. Consider the following: it is estimated that there are 12,255 inmates who are high school dropouts in Maryland's prison system, and GED completions in the adult prison population per year from 2007 to 2011 only ranged from 696 to 725.

GED Completions
FY 07 – 696
FY 08 – 725
FY 09 – 678
FY 10 – 704
FY 11 – 702

GOAL: Increase the number of GED completions by at least 10% by 2015.

There may be a financial barrier to increasing the number of GED completers. It costs Maryland taxpayers \$34,842 per inmate and over \$400 million per year to incarcerate just those 12,255 inmates who were dropouts. The research shows that recidivism rates of GED completers are about 10-20% lower than the recidivism rate of those who do not obtain their GED.¹² If only 10% of the 702 inmates receiving a GED in Maryland prisons in 2011 do not return to prison, the prison system saves \$2.3 million which could be reinvested to expand the GED program. There is significant research that shows lower recidivism rates for those who obtain some level of education in prison. It is likely that increased levels of education increase the likelihood of employability. In Baltimore City alone, over 9,000 inmates are released from prison per year.

¹² Hendricks, Hendricks, and Kaufman, *Literacy, Criminal Activity, and Recidivism*, http://www.americanreadingforum.org/yearbook/yearbooks/01_yearbook/html/12_Hendricks.htm
Mentor, *GED Programs in Prison*, <http://kenmentor.com/papers/ged.htm>
National Center for Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, *Is the GED Valuable to Those Who Pass It*, <http://www.ncsall.net/index.html?id=648.html>
Ornisky, *The GED Test: Low Cost Solutions to Reducing Recidivism*, <http://www.passged.com/educators/articles/41-Reducing-Recidivism-with-The-GED.php>

C. Entrepreneurial Programs

What if inmates had some exposure to entrepreneurial ideas in prison to create their own jobs when they were released? In 2007, the Prison Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice published “*Venturing Beyond the Gates: Facilitating Successful Reentry With Entrepreneurship.*” It presents an in-depth study of incarceration in America and the role of entrepreneurial training for prisoners. The report recognizes that:

While self-employment may not be a viable option for many individuals leaving prison, exposure to entrepreneurship training can play an important role in fostering successful reentry. A small percentage may have the resources and mindset to use entrepreneurship as the key to their successful reintegration, either as their sole form of employment, or in addition to a traditional job. Others will open a business once they have achieved reentry stability through other forms of employment. For many, because entrepreneurial thinking is infused with the philosophy of empowerment, exposure to entrepreneurial training will reshape their perspective on their role in society. These individuals may never become entrepreneurs themselves, but will use their entrepreneurship training to improve their performance as employees and to proactively engage with their families and communities.

Consequently, even if only a tiny fraction of the vast number of people returning home from prison pursued self-employment, it could make a significant impact. If between one and seven percent of people leaving state or federal prison next year started their own businesses (i.e., the percentage of welfare-to-work participants who start businesses in addition to or instead of securing traditional employment), 6,500 to 45,000 new businesses would be created in the United States.

A new post-release entrepreneurial training program has begun in Prince George’s County. It is called Teach’em to Fish. It plans to focus on building businesses that require little overhead “such as owning a barbershop, car detailing service, landscaping company, or commercial office cleaning business etc. or web design.”¹³

Since 1982, DOC has implemented Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE), the prison industry arm of the Maryland. MCE provides an environment for the operation of correctional industries that as closely as possible resembles the environment for the business operations of a private corporate entity. Inmates are taught job skills and are provided with constructive employment, which leads to the development of both technical and social skills, and improves the employability of the inmate upon release. The training and employment with MCE has

¹³ *Nonprofit Provides Hope for Prince George’s Inmates*, <http://www.gazette.net/article/20120626/NEWS/706289995/1029/casting-a-net-of-hope-for-prince-george-s-inmates&template=gazette>

resulted in recidivism rates which are half of the DOC rate. Approximately 1,800 – 2,000 inmates are employed by MCE at any given time in the state.¹⁴

It is recommended that DPSCS look for options to expand the availability of entrepreneurial programs to inmates around the state.

VIII. Conclusion

GOAL: Reduce the dropout rate to 6% or less by 2015-2016 and, thus, increase its graduation rate statewide to 94%.

Agency/Partner	Recommendations
Local school systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-examine how dollars are invested in dropout prevention • Track dropout reduction statistics • Compare reduction numbers to financial investment on education • Identify and adopt more successful programs • Ramp up their focus on third grade reading level as a risk factor for dropping out • Seek appropriate ways to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions • Assess the impact of discipline on minority students • Place more emphasis on chronically absent students as a risk factor for dropping out
Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate the use of early warning indicators (third grade reading level, number of suspensions, numbers of days absent etc.) • Help local school systems reduce suspensions and expulsions for non-violent conduct • Identify and publicize evidence-based dropout prevention programs • Explore vocational education options for students indentified on the dropout track
Department of Juvenile Services (DJS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a linkage with all school systems in the state to get juveniles re-enrolled in school quickly after leaving a DJS facility • Continue to work with the local school systems and MSDE to improve the coordination of educational services to students in the juvenile justice system
Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation (DLLR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to increase access to the GED for all populations • Increase the number of GED completions by 10% by 2015
Department of Public Safety & Correctional Services (DPSCS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track cost savings for every inmate who receives a GED in prison and does not recidivate • Allocate appropriate cost savings to DLLR to provide more correctional education • Look for options to expand the availability of entrepreneurial programs for inmates
Governor and the State of Maryland	<p>Allocate the financial resources to develop and sustain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropout prevention programs • Programs designed to improve the educational opportunities for juvenile offenders and adult inmates
Parents/Caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your children attend school everyday

¹⁴ http://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/Exec/DPSCS/DOC/COR3-509_2011.pdf
<http://mce.md.gov/mce/AboutMCE/tabid/71/Default.aspx>