



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

- Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee
- House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education
- Senate Appropriations Committee on Education/Higher Education

Pilot Program to Raise the High School Dropout Age from Sixteen to Eighteen

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INTRODUCTION

Newton-Conover City Schools

Newton-Conover City Schools serve students primarily domiciled in the cities of Newton and Conover. These “twin cities” have been described as places where almost every doorway says, “come on in” and every smiling face greets you with southern hospitality. Citizens want to make guests feel at home, whether they find themselves shopping for furniture or enjoying a quiet weekend getaway. Historic sites and museums weave a rich tapestry of tales, memories, and discoveries. There are plenty of places to hit the trail and marvel at our countryside. The arts are alive and well, stirring the soul through music, dance, and drama, and there are enough nearby attractions and special events to keep you well entertained. Neighborhood shopping centers, regional malls, sporting and entertainment venues, and conveniently located airports are among a few of the area’s amenities.

The two cities of Newton and Conover have a diverse population of 21,000. The intimate nature of the community allows for the blending of cultures, yet respects and values the uniqueness of each person.

Newton-Conover City Schools is comprised of seven member schools (2 high, 1 middle, 3 elementary, 1 non-traditional) with diverse ethnic representation (White: 50%, Hispanic: 25%, African-American: 12%, Asian: 6%, Multi-racial/Other: 7%). In 2014-2015, 66% of Newton-Conover City Schools’ students received Free/Reduced Lunch. Students are served by 466 employees, 270 are certified. Newton-Conover City Schools was recently recognized for having the highest graduation rate in the State of North Carolina for the 2014-2015 school year (97.1%). In 2013-2014, Newton-Conover City Schools was recognized as a district with one of the lowest dropout rates in North Carolina (5th).

In the last 7 years, Newton-Conover High School athletic teams have won 10 State Championships in 6 different team sports. In 2013-2014, Newton-Conover High School and Discovery High School graduates earned more than \$8 million in scholarships. Both high schools have been recognized by the *U. S. News and World Report* as being among the top high schools in North Carolina. To view commercials about each of the unique schools that make up Newton-Conover City Schools, visit: <http://bit.ly/1NGzVzs>.

Hickory Public Schools

Hickory Public Schools (HPS) offers families more than a journey of excellence in education. The children who attend HPS, a district of educational service for more than a century, experience life-changing opportunities, setting a course for success in higher education, the workforce or the military.

Hickory Public Schools, nestled within the city limits of Hickory, was founded in the mid-1800's. A small city located in western North Carolina between Charlotte and Asheville in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, Hickory has earned the title of "All-American City" three times.

The founding history, specific historical landmarks, a focus on excellence in education, recreational growth, and the steadfast dedication from community citizens, have all contributed to making Hickory the successful city of today.

Hickory Public Schools (registered as Hickory City Schools) serves approximately 4,400 students. The student population is approximately 50% Caucasian and 50% African American, Hispanic, and other. More than 30 languages are spoken in homes across the district.

Children who attend HPS also represent a diverse socio-economic background with 53.93 percent receiving free or reduced lunch. Three schools, Longview Elementary, Southwest Elementary and Hickory Career and Arts Magnet High School, are also served through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) which means that because these schools have significant numbers (nearly 100 %) of students and families living at a poverty level, families no longer need to submit applications for free and reduced meals.

Despite these and other challenges, students are expected and continue to achieve. The district's graduation rate remains steady attaining some of the highest numbers over recent years and students continue to earn scholarships to attend higher education.

Unique Programs at Hickory Public Schools

Hickory Career & Arts Magnet High School (HCAM), a non-traditional high school, offering eight different academies to students who represent every corner of the county and beyond. Programs include: Advertising & Graphic Design, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Adobe Digital, Firefighting (and EMS), Forensics, Drama, and Dance. Several of the programs offer college credit and/or certifications.

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Program is offered at Hickory High, in addition to Advanced Placement and College Preparatory courses.

Hickory High is the ONLY high school in all of Catawba County that offers ***Orchestra***. Orchestra is also offered at the middle school level at Hickory Public Schools.

Additional Points of Interest

- The graduation rate for Hickory Public Schools has held steady with 83.9 percent of students graduating in four years. This represents an increase of 13.6 percentage points from the 2006 graduation rate of 70.4 percent.

- Graduating seniors from Hickory Public Schools have earned collectively more than \$15 million in scholarships over the past three years. Graduates continue to experience success in competitive colleges and universities, the military and the workforce.
- The most recently reported dropout rate of 2.84 is the lowest in the district's history, a reduction of 10 percent from the previous year.
- Technology has expanded at every school with multiple devices available for teacher and student use. Curriculum and lessons frequently incorporate technology.
- Visual arts, band, orchestra and chorus continue to be recognized with superior ratings—while athletic teams have won conferences and state titles.
- High school students are offered balanced academic opportunities to enhance their path to career and college readiness—including classes in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, Advanced Placement (AP) and career academies that provide college credit.
- Hickory Public Schools has frequently been recognized on a national level for excellent achievements representative of the faculty, staff and most importantly, the students. For example, last spring, Northview Middle School was recognized as a *National School to Watch*, designating the school as high-performing, providing academic excellence to all students, and creating small learning communities in which mutually respectful relationships support all students' intellectual, ethical and social growth.

To learn more about the exciting opportunities and events happening at HPS, visit the district on the web (hickoryschools.net), Facebook and Twitter.

PILOT

Although the majority of students in both Newton-Conover and Hickory Public school districts graduate from high school, a small percentage decide to leave school before earning the fundamental high school diploma. Research indicates that students who drop out of school are more likely to be unemployed, earn lower salaries when they do work, and are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system.

(<http://www.nassp.org/Content.aspx?topic=Raising the Compulsory School Attendance Age Proposed>)

In an attempt to curb the dropout rate, many states are considering raising the compulsory school attendance age from 16 or 17 to 18. According to the Department of Labor, seventeen states and the District of Columbia have already raised the minimum age at which a student is legally allowed to leave compulsory education. As education leaders in North Carolina discussed and debated this issue, Newton-Conover and Hickory Public school districts petitioned the North Carolina General Assembly to serve as a pilot to explore programmatic structures and resources required to support and sustain such an initiative and then examine the results.

The content of this report provides a summary of our work to date. The table below provides data regarding both Hickory Public Schools and as Newton-Conover City Schools relative to the items requested in the legislation.

CRITERIA	HICKORY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	NEWTON-CONOVER CITY SCHOOLS
Attendance Rates*	<p>2014-2015 (unofficial) Hickory High Schools: 92.9% Hickory Career & Arts Magnet High School: 90.4%</p> <p>2013-2014 Hickory High Schools: 94.7% Hickory Career & Arts Magnet High School: 91.7%</p>	<p>2014-2015 (unofficial) Newton-Conover High Schools: 93.05% Discovery High School: 95.15%</p> <p>2013-2014 Newton-Conover High Schools: 98% Discovery High Schools: 99.23%</p>
Graduation Rates	<p>2014-2015: (unofficial) Hickory High Schools: 86.1% HCAM: 84%</p> <p>2013-2014 Hickory High Schools: 87.5% Hickory Career & Arts Magnet High School: 70.3%</p>	<p>2014-2015: (unofficial) Newton-Conover High Schools: 96.8% Discovery HS: 100%(N-CCS #1 Graduation Rate in North Carolina History)</p> <p>2013-2014 (4th Highest in NC) Newton-Conover High Schools 91.7% Discovery HS: 100%</p>

Dropout Rates	2014-2015 Hickory High Schools: Unavailable 2013 – 2014 Hickory High Schools: 2.84%	2014-2015 Newton-Conover High Schools: Unavailable 2013-2014: Newton-Conover High Schools: .92% (5th Lowest in NC)
Acts of Crime and Violence**	2014-2015 (unofficial) Hickory High Schools: 0 acts Hickory Career & Arts Magnet High School: 0 acts 2013-2014 Hickory High Schools: 0 acts Hickory Career & Arts Magnet High School: 0 acts	2014-2015 (unofficial) Newton-Conover High Schools: .014 per 1,000 students Discovery HS: 0 acts per 1,000 students 2013-2014 Newton-Conover High Schools: .9 acts per 1,000 students Discovery HS: 0 acts per 1,000 students
Number of Reported Violations of the Compulsory Attendance Laws	2014-2015 9 (age 16+) 3 (under 16) 2013-2014 5 (all, under age 16)	2014-2015 2 (Occurred in the fall 2015 semester; engagement with the family program component began in the spring 2015 semester.) 2013-2014 2
Number of At-Risk Students Served in Non-traditional Programs***	Hickory After Hours Academy 2014-2015: 34 students served (3 graduates) STAY Program 2013 - 14: 26 students served (4 graduates)	Newton-Conover High Schools 2014-2015 Summer School: 84 students served 2013-2014 Summer School: 65 students served

***Graduation Rate:** The graduation rate is based on a four-year or five year cohort group of students. As the pilot has been in effect for one school year, at this time we are unable to determine the impact the legislation will have on the graduation rate. We will continue to track students over the next three years to have an accurate rate calculation.

****Teen Crime Statistics:** One difficulty in determining the impact of the dropout age increase legislation is that Hickory Public and Newton-Conover City Schools' districts constitute less than half the number of students served by Catawba County Schools (the county in which the two pilot districts are located). That said, Catawba County Schools is not included or involved in this pilot. Therefore, the ability to disaggregate the data of crime in Newton, Conover, and Hickory from all of the teen crime statistics data of Catawba County is very difficult and the results may not be entirely accurate.

*****Night Programs:** Hickory Public Schools does not have a true night program. HPS does have an alternative time program, which operates from 1:30 - 4:30 each day. Transportation is provided for students and classes are taken online. During the 2013-14 school year, twenty-six students were served and thirty-four students in the 2014-15 school year.

INTERVENTIONS

Hickory Public Schools	Newton-Conover City Schools
District-Intervention Process (developed cooperatively with Newton-Conover City Schools)	District-Intervention Process (developed cooperatively with Hickory Public Schools)
Home Visits	Home Visits
After-Hours Academy (see above)	School-level Group Sessions
Judges in Schools	Judges in Schools
Virtual/Online Options	Virtual/Online Options
School-level Group Sessions	N-CHS Pride Card Program
Hickory Career Arts Magnet Graduation Coach	Career/Job Placement Exploration
Partnership with FamilyNet for onsite mental health therapists	Youth Summit (sponsored by Western Piedmont Council on Government) develops job skills, interview skills, life skills
Alternatives to Suspension Program	Core Academy Slots
Core Academy (grades 9-12)	Totally Responsible Person Bullying Prevention Program
Youth Summit (Sponsored by Western Piedmont Council on Government)	Multi-Disciplinary Meetings (Monthly): DA's Office, Juvenile Court, Social Services, School-System Student Services
Multi-Disciplinary Meetings (Monthly): DA's Office, Juvenile Court, Social Services, School-System Student Services	Celebration Meals for Improvement in Attendance, Behavior, Academic Performance
Capturing Kids Hearts	Initial 10-Day Judges in School Court Session to ensure re-enrollment of students 16-18 years of age who have are not currently enrolled
OLWEUS Bullying Prevention Program	Deferred prosecution
Adjustments to Attendance Procedures	Steering committee
Deferred prosecution	Referrals to local mental health
Steering committee	Adjustments of Attendance Procedures
Referrals to local mental health	

INTERPRETATION OF IMPACT

While a measure of the success both districts have experienced relative to graduation rate and dropout rate could be seen as a by-product of the dropout age increase legislation, it is a stretch statistically to be able to correlate the legislation variable as causation of the outcomes. From the perspective of the two cooperating school systems as well as the steering committee that included representation from the court system and the Division of Social Services, there were two key impacts of the legislation.

First, the increased dropout age provided both school systems with a “bluff” factor. The “bluff” factor involves the potential punitive consequences of not complying with the pilot compulsory attendance age policy, even though the punitive consequences are more implied than concrete. The “bluff” factor has helped address poor student attendance in the following ways:

- Extends attendance processes beyond the freshman year of high school when most students turn 16 and dropout of school;
- Is an effective deterrent for elementary and middle school students since the age they are no longer subject to the compulsory attendance law has been pushed 2-3 years further into the future;
- Provides an impetus for forming a steering committee comprised of two school systems and local agencies that do not regularly meet otherwise;
- Provides an impetus for the creation of partnerships and interventions such as the Judges in Schools program (modified to meet the needs of the two school systems) and the Adult Diploma Program at Sipe’s Orchard Home (in conjunction with Catawba Valley Community College); and
- Provides an impetus for approaching local boards of education relative to policy and funding to help provide for the unique needs of students who typically have exited high school by age 16.

Secondly, the compulsory attendance age increase has helped delay the dropout decision for up to three additional school years. In that the human brain is not fully developed until roughly age 24, removing the option to dropout at 16 provides additional time for students to realize the value of their education and prepare for life after high school. Newcomb (1996) indicates that the more time adolescents have to gain educational experience during the teenage years, the better prepared they will be to face life’s challenges in adulthood. Early dropout from high school is a “pseudo mature” event that precipitates premature involvement in adult roles. It is important to extend education as long as possible within the developmental period from age 14-18.

An additional consideration that must be addressed before arriving at any definitive conclusions regarding the legislation involves the variable of time for data analysis. In order to provide a complete report of the progress of the legislation that can be correlated to producing outcomes, Hickory Public and Newton-Conover City Schools would like to have an extension through the end of the current school year to provide additional data for public consideration. Through the first year of the program, the districts collaborated with local court systems, Departments of Social Services and Juvenile Justice, judges and lawyers to develop a program and a prescriptive plan for implementation. These partnerships resulted in Judges in Schools, attendance contracts,

cooperation with assistant district attorney's office, and procedures for appropriate documentation. The process was fully implemented during the spring of the 2014-15 school year. A full year of data is not yet available for analyses.

NEXT STEPS

The first suggestion for consideration would be to allow for another semester of data to be collected for the review of both legislative and public bodies relative to the further development and expansion of the compulsory attendance age increase legislation. Beyond this, it is requested that the following items, developed by the steering committee for the dropout age increase legislation, be considered strongly for future growth, expansion, and successful outcomes:

- Provide funding for District Court Judges to administer Attendance Court at least monthly using a similar process to the pilot district Judges In Schools program.
- Provide funding for each LEA to have an Intervention Specialist whose primary focus is K-12 Dropout Prevention/Support.
- Revise General Statute for Compulsory Attendance Law to include specific punitive measures for violations of this law (revisit the wording of the current law regarding parent responsibility for students over 16 years of age).
- Add options for effective consequences from "Protective Supervision" to include: Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services, Removal of Privileges, Community Service/Restitution, and Weekend Lockup Experience.
- Re-vamp the criteria for assessing the success of the dropout age increase to focus on the items listed above; if expanded, the criteria would need to be applicable statewide (or at least countywide).
- Provide funding for Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services for students lacking a funding source.
- Allow funding in the area of Career and Technical Education to be utilized for specific curricula that focus on building 10-year plans for incoming high school freshman in an effort to begin the process of connecting education to vocation/life goals of students long before the age of 18.

Additional Information and Artifacts

Proposal for Newton-Conover City Schools:

Raising the Dropout Age to 18

August 2013

Facts

- Twenty states and the District of Columbia have set the dropout age at 18 years of age; 12 states have set the dropout age at 17 years of age; 18 states have kept the dropout age at 16 years of age.
- The Commonwealth of Kentucky has given multiple districts statewide \$10,000 grants to assist in the planning and implementation of the increased dropout age.
- The state of North Carolina has been considering raising the dropout age since 2007.

School Dropout Defined

The North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) policy HSP-Q-001 (NCDPI, “Dropout Prevention and Intervention,” 2007) reports students who “...were enrolled in a school during the previous school year but are not enrolled in that same school on the 20th day of the current school year” are counted as dropouts (p. 103). The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) calculates the dropout rate by subtracting the number of students who were enrolled in the previous school year but dropped out prior to the 20th day of school the current school year. This number is added to the enrollment of the school at the 20th day of the current school year and then divided by 2. NCDPI defines “dropout” in a very similar fashion to NCES, but includes another item of special importance to track: cohort graduation rate. NCDPI defines “cohort graduation rate” as the percentage of ninth graders who have graduated from high school four years later (NCDPI, “Dropout Prevention and Intervention,” 2007).

The Negative Impact of High School Dropout

The high school student dropout issue is becoming increasingly important as educators and taxpayers alike gain awareness of the detrimental impact this problem has on our nation’s economy. According to an Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) report, 15.4% of high school dropouts were unemployed, compared to just 10% of high school graduates. Dropouts are more likely than graduates to experience health problems, engage in criminal activities, and become dependent on government programs such as welfare (Martin, Tobin, & Sugai, 2002). Broader negative outcomes associated with dropping out of school include lower national income and tax revenue for the support of government services, increased demand for social services, increased crime and antisocial behavior, reduced political participation and intergenerational mobility, and poorer levels of health (Hayes, Nelson, Tabin, Pearson, & Worthy, 2002). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001) makes steadily improving rates of student graduation one of the key criteria by which public schools are evaluated. NCLB states that by 2014, student graduation rates should be 100% nationwide.

Characteristics of students who typically drop out include but are not limited to (a) low socio-economic status, (b) being of a minority ethnicity, (c) poor school attendance, (d) poor academic performance, and (e) poor school engagement (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997). Predictors of dropout can also be categorized by family context (family changes, parental attitudes, and socialization), student's personal resources (attitudes, behaviors), school factors and experiences such as test scores, and school tracking (Alexander et al., 1997; Hess & Copeland, 2001).

Significance of the Problem

The student dropout problem has negative consequences both for the individual who drops out as well as the society in which the dropout lives. The United States depends on students graduating from high school prepared to enter the twenty-first century workforce. The cost of assisting students to complete their high school education is a small investment compared to the cost of failing to do so. Levin et al. (2007) concluded, "Educational investments to raise the high school graduation rate appear to be doubly beneficial: the quest for greater equity for all young adults would also produce greater efficiency of public resources" (p. 1).

In 2008 approximately 6 million people between the ages of 16 and 24, representing 8% of the total U.S. population of that age group, were without a high school diploma (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010). Approximately one-third of all high school students in the United States fail to graduate in any given year (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006). During the 2009-2010 school year, 16,804 students in grades 9-12 dropped out of school in North Carolina. A higher percentage of students in the southern United States drop out than in any other region of the country (NCES, 2005).

Costs to Society

The educational levels of citizens and the economy they contribute to and receive benefits from are inextricably linked. Levin et al. (2007) reported, "One of the best-documented relationships in economics is the link between education and income: more highly educated people have higher incomes" (p. 6). About 1.3 million students did not graduate from U.S. high schools in 2004, costing more than \$325 billion in lost wages, taxes and productivity (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). According to Levin et al. (2007), "Failure to graduate from high school has both private and public consequences: income is lower, which means lower tax contributions to finance public services" (p. 14). Illustrating this point further, the average high school dropout is associated with approximately \$240,000 worth of costs to society in terms of lower tax contributions, higher Medicaid and Medicare reliance, higher reliance on welfare, and higher rates of criminal activity (Levin & Belfield, 2007). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) provides current unemployment data indicating that high school dropouts are more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates.

The United States strives to keep pace with the rest of the world in terms of developing an educated populace. In global competition, the United States ranks 18th in high school graduation rates among developed nations (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2006). Kennelly and Monrad (2007) stated, "The high school dropout problem is a crisis for the United States, in part because it impacts not only individuals and their education, but also because the economic and social costs are so dramatic" (p. 4). The more than 12 million students who will drop out over the next decade will cost the United States about \$3 trillion (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007).

A higher percentage of dropouts are unemployed compared to adults with a graduation credential (U.S. Department of Labor, “Unemployment rate,” 2010). Levin et al. (2007) stressed the macroeconomic benefits of students graduating from high school:

A society that provides fairer access to opportunities, that is more productive and with higher employment, and that has better health and less crime is a better society in itself. It is simply an added incentive that the attainment of such a society is also profoundly good economics. (p. 22)

The economic impact of high school graduation does not end with the amount of revenue educated citizens produce. The impact is also felt in the societal resources that are not expended to alleviate the negative outcomes associated with student dropout. Lochner and Moretti (2004) report a strong causal relationship between education and crime. Levin et al. (2007) found that higher educational attainment reduces crime both by juveniles and adults. Approximately 75% of state prison inmates and 59% of federal inmates are dropouts. A dropout is also 3.5 times more likely to be incarcerated at some point in his/her lifetime compared to a high school graduate (U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Because high school graduates are less likely to commit crimes, increasing the high school completion rate by just one percent for all men ages 20-60 would reduce costs in the criminal justice system by an estimated \$1.4 billion per year (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006). Striving for higher graduation rates is good policy, both socially and fiscally.

Personal Costs

The personal economic cost to the individual dropout is best exemplified by the projection provided by Wise (2007) at the Senate Committee hearing regarding the NCLB reauthorization. Citing a report by the Teachers College of Columbia University, Wise (2007) reported that male high school graduates earn up to \$322,000 more over the course of their lifetimes than dropouts, while college graduates earn up to \$1.3 million more. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2010) reported a significant difference in median income of persons age 18-67 who graduate from high school (\$42,000) compared to those who did not (\$23,000). A survey of families living in poverty indicated that a family in which the head of the household does not have a high school education has a one in four chance of living in poverty (Iceland, 2000). As a cause for alarm, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) held that U.S. high school and college graduation rates are behind those of other nations at a time when about 90% of the fastest growing jobs will require some post-secondary education.

The personal costs of dropping out are not just economic. The physical health of a high school dropout is shown to decline more rapidly than that of a high school graduate. In one survey, dropouts age 25 or older reported being in worse shape than adults who were not dropouts, regardless of income (Pleis, Lucas, & Ward, 2009). Gibbons (2006) reported that an average 45-year-old high school dropout is in worse health than a 65-year-old high school graduate. He also found that high school dropouts have a life expectancy nearly a decade shorter than high school graduates. In terms of emotional health, students benefit from extending their time in educational settings because they mature while attending school until they graduate:

The more time adolescents have to gain educational experience during the teenage years, the better prepared they will be to face life's challenges in adulthood. Early dropout from high school is a “pseudo

mature” event that precipitates premature involvement in adult roles. It is important to extend education as long as possible within the developmental period from age 14-18. (Newcomb, 1996, p. 4)

Prolonging the maturation process to its logical conclusion is especially important in today’s society, which is fraught with emotional stressors, including media saturation, economic recession, and other problematic forces. In some cases, a school may be the most nurturing setting a student finds himself/herself in on a regular basis. Young people in danger of leaving the nurturing support structure provided by schools need to be identified and helped.

Risk Factors in Student Dropout

The literature on the dropout problem documents several risk factors. The term “risk factors” as defined by Gleason and Dynarski (2002) refers to “...student characteristics or measures of past school performance thought to be associated with future dropping out” (p. 25). Risk factors are organized into three general categories: status (low socioeconomic status, ethnicity), school-related (grade retention, student engagement), and student-related (absenteeism, delinquent behavior, low self-esteem, poor academic performance).

Protective Factors

- Internal locus of control; strong relationships with peers and staff; optimistic views of the future; engaged in the learning process; healthy self-esteem; receive ongoing counseling and nurturing from staff
- In terms of emotional health, students benefit from extending their time in educational settings because they mature while attending school until they graduate:
 - The more time adolescents have to gain educational experience during the teenage years, the better prepared they will be to face life’s challenges in adulthood. Early dropout from high school is a “pseudo mature” event that precipitates premature involvement in adult roles. It is important to extend education as long as possible within the developmental period from age 14-18. (Newcomb, 1996, p. 4).
 - Prolonging the maturation process to its logical conclusion is especially important in today’s society, which is fraught with emotional stressors, including media saturation, economic recession, and other problematic forces. In some cases, a school may be the most nurturing setting a student finds himself/herself in on a regular basis. Young people in danger of leaving the nurturing support structure provided by schools need to be identified and helped.
- Persistent students appear to have several important characteristics that contribute to successfully obtaining a high school diploma. Students who persist through graduation often have an internal locus of control regarding their academic future (Finn & Rock, 1997; Suh, S., Suh, J., & Houston, 2007). Persisting students often report having strong relationships with their peers and instructional staff (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Worrell & Hale, 2001). Optimistic views of the future and optimistic belief systems are also characteristic of persisting students (Suh, S. et al., 2007; Worrell & Hale, 2001).
- Persistent students are often goal oriented and expect to attend school in the upcoming school year (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Suh, S. et al., 2007). High levels of student engagement and strong self-esteem are often possessed by persistent students (Finn & Rock, 1997). Persistent students

also have positive attitudes about school in general and are willing to “play the game” to get their high school diplomas (Knesting & Waldron, 2006; Worrell & Hale, 2001). School staff can nurture at-risk students by tapping into protective factors that foster student persistence through graduation.

- Staff-owned protective factors are equally important in encouraging students in persisting through graduation. Students are more likely to persist if they have strong relationships with their instructional staff (Smink & Reimer, 2005), benefit from positive staff attitudes and mannerisms (Kortering & Braziel, 1999), and receive counseling services in individual and/or group settings (Trusty, 1996; Chow, 1996). When staff members form strong partnerships with parents and community agencies (Chow, 1996), students persist through graduation more often. Schools in which staff members modify their academic programming for students at risk of dropping out and provide ongoing academic support are more likely to increase student persistence through graduation (Chow, 1996; Suh, S. et al., 2007).

Early Identification

It is very important to identify students at-risk for dropout early on during their school career to apply appropriate interventions to help change their academic outcomes. Attendance and Academic Performance are key indicators of eventual dropout decisions.

Many intellectual and behavioral factors can predict, with varied levels of accuracy, which students are most likely to drop out long before they are old enough to do so. Many future dropouts can be identified as early as sixth grade by studying academic and engagement issues (Balfanz and Herzog, 2005).

Given the potential negative outcomes for both the individual and society, students displaying risk factors for dropping out should be identified as accurately and swiftly as possible. Levin et al. (2007) asserted that the net benefits would increase significantly if the educational interventions could be targeted more accurately to at-risk individuals who need them. Delays in identifying students exhibiting risk factors can complicate interventions needed to prevent dropping out of school. When delays in identification and intervention occur, multiple dropout factors may develop when previously only one factor was present (Suh, S. et al., 2007).

The purpose in identifying and interpreting these factors is to accurately predict which students are most likely to drop out of school. Janosz, Archambault, Morizot, and Pagani (2008) emphasized the importance of developing cost-efficient screening procedures to assist in identifying students predicted to dropout of school. The National High School Center (2007) has developed an early warning tracking system for students who are likely to drop out. There are two high-yield indicators that this particular tracking system documents: attendance and academic course performance. Student attendance is tracked as a key data point (students missing 10% or more of instructional time are considered at-risk). Course performance is tracked using course failures (students are listed as at-risk if they fail one class), Grade Point Average (students with a GPA below 2.0 are at-risk), and an on-track indicator (indicating that the students have passed enough classes to be promoted to the next grade). With early identification comes the potential to establish appropriate interventions and curb the cycle of failure.

At-Risk Student Needs Assessment

1. Student Gender:
2. Age of Student:
3. Student Ethnicity:
4. Primary Student Language:
5. EC Status:
6. Difficulties in Reading:
7. Difficulties in several subjects:
8. Does the student have any physical or medical problems?
9. Has the student been retained? If so, how many times and in what grades?
10. Does the student get along with teachers?
11. Does the student feel accepted by faculty and staff?
12. Does the student like school? If not, are there any particular subjects the student does like?
13. Does the student expect to do well in school?
14. Does the student have trouble making friends?
15. Does the student get into trouble at school? How many office referrals to date?
16. Is the student withdrawn or shy?
17. Is the student bullied by other students?
18. Is the student a bully to other students?
19. Does the student get along well with other students?
20. Is the student absent from school more than twice a month? -Average number of days missed each month:
21. Does the student work more than 15 hours per week?
22. Does the student participate in school-sponsored or community based extra-curricular activities?
23. Is the student suspected of being involved in alcohol/drug use?
24. Is the student a suspected gang member?
25. Does the family respond with action as needed when contacted by the school?

HICKORY CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION

RESOLUTION

Whereas, the mission of the Hickory City Schools is to provide every student with the best possible instruction, multiple opportunities for enrichment and support, and examples of citizenship resulting in a high quality of life; and

Whereas, a vital component of the mission of the Hickory City Schools is to encourage and help all students earn their high school diploma, gain additional educational benefits at the college level or successfully obtain employment; and

Whereas, employment opportunities in Hickory for young men and women who have not obtained a high school diploma have greatly diminished over the years; and

Whereas, the Hickory City Schools offers an array of vocational training that can significantly assist young men and women who choose to seek employment after high school graduation; and

Whereas, the planned Vocational High School funded by Catawba County and Catawba Valley Community College will offer additional opportunities for Hickory City Schools students.

Now, **T**herefore, be it

Resolved, that the Hickory City Board of Education hereby requests all North Carolina State Legislators to submit, as soon as possible, legislation enabling Hickory City Schools to exercise a Pilot Program requiring all students in Hickory City Schools to attend school until they are graduated from high school or the completion of the school year of their 18th birthday. Understanding there is considerable prior planning required to properly accomplish this Pilot Program, we request this law to be effective July 1, 2014.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 2013.

Dr. Walter H. Hart, Ed.D.

Superintendent

Hickory City Schools

Angela Beaver Simmons

Chair

Hickory City Board of Education

Compulsory Attendance Age

Update to the Hickory Public Schools Board of Education, October 14, 2013

The National Picture

Education Week – April 28, 2013 – Children’s Trends Database	
Annual U.S. Dropout Rate	3,030,000
Daily U.S. Dropout Rate	8,300
% of students who drop out in 9 th grade	36%
% of crimes committed in U.S. by high school dropouts	75%
U.S. jobs high school dropouts are NOT eligible for	90%

Increasing the compulsory attendance age has widespread support, with about a dozen states increasing the legal dropout age over the last decade. Of the 18 states that have not increased the compulsory attendance age, several, including Alaska, Kentucky, Maryland and Wyoming have introduced legislation to do so.

In his 2012 State of the Union address, President Obama stated, “When students are not allowed to drop out, they do better. So tonight, I am proposing that every state, every state require that all students stay in high school until they graduate or turn 18.”

What does the research tell us about raising the compulsory attendance age?

According to a study co-authored by Alan Krueger, the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, each additional year of schooling that results from increasing the compulsory attendance age will help the potential dropout to increase their future earnings capacity by seven percent.

According to a study from the Brookings Institute, increasing the attendance age does not automatically increase graduation rates. They found that graduation rates increased slightly in states with higher compulsory attendance ages. They found that raising the compulsory attendance age influences a small group of students to stay in school longer, but the effects on graduation rates are slight. They conclude by stating, “If some students receive some benefit as a

result of raising the compulsory attendance age, it is rational for a state to set its compulsory attendance age at 18.”

They note that raising the age of compulsory school attendance in and of itself does not solve the dropout dilemma. The dropout dilemma is multifaceted; an increase in age needs to be accompanied by close monitoring of school performance, mentoring, case management and academic supports.

In his text, The Case for Reform: Raising the Compulsory Attendance Age, John Bridgeland notes, “Laws and policies reflect our values. Imagine the signal a law sends to a young person that permits them to drop out at the age of 16. Such laws bless the act of dropping out, while dropouts later view the permission as a curse.”

The Local Picture

The North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation permitting Hickory Public Schools and Newton-Conover City Schools to participate in a pilot program to raise the compulsory attendance age from 16 to 18, beginning with the next school year.

Hickory Public Schools has experienced some success increasing the cohort graduation rate in recent years. Initiatives include, but are not limited to, opening of HCAM, adding a graduation coach, establishing an after-hours program, enhancing credit recovery options and establishing an alternative to suspension program.

In the future, we hope to expand these efforts by expanding the after-hours program, adding a graduation coach, establishing additional work-school partnerships and examining online learning options.

The Newton-Conover Board of Education recently adopted the resolution to participate in the pilot program. Our high school principals, along with several key staff members, met with officials from Newton-Conover. We discussed dropout prevention initiatives and strategies. Our principals and staff are prepared to “give it a try.” While there are challenges, we believe that if the NC compulsory attendance law were written today, we would not establish 16 as the appropriate age. This law was written for a different era.

Judges in Schools Process Information (Sample): Newton-Conover City Schools

Process

1. Contact Judy McLaughlin and/or Dr. Aron Gabriel regarding referral for Judges in Schools to determine availability and next scheduled date of JIS.
2. Contact the parents of the student that you are referring and explain the purposed of Judges in Schools is to provide an intervention to the court process. This is a service provided to Newton Conover City Schools and is held at either the Newton Courthouse or Hickory Courthouse depending on date. Parents are **HIGHLY** encouraged to be present as there will be great strategies and support given during this process
3. Provide family with date and time for JIS session - This session will be Tuesday, October 13th at 12 noon at Newton Courthouse. Courtroom will be given on that day. Just let them know you are there for Judges in Schools.
4. Send/email students' behavior reports/discipline reports, attendance reports, and summary of referral to Judy McLaughlin and Aron Gabriel by Monday noon so that we can get information to Judge Walker for review and get the students on the docket.
5. School principals/counselors/SROs are invited to attend if they would like to speak during the process or be present to hear any of the Judges suggestions.

We realize this is a quick turnaround for this JIS session. Future sessions will be scheduled in the near future.

Let me know if you would like to discuss any specific students in person or would like to know more information about the Judges in Schools program. I will be glad to swing by and see you at anytime.

In Summary

Please have information regarding student referrals to JIS to me by noon on Monday so that we can gather the necessary documentation and get information to Judge Walker. Also if you will contact the parents and let them know they have been referred and schedule for transportation to the courthouse. It is wonderful if the parents can be there as well although I understand this sometimes may not be a possibility.

Attendance Tracking Form

(Created in Google Forms for School Attendance Contact to Complete)

Student Last Name* _

Student First Name* _

Mother's Name

Father's Name

Home Phone

Cell Phone

Teacher Name

School Name* _

Student Address

Date of 3-day Letter

Month Day 2015

Date of 6-day letter

Month Day 2015

Date of 10-day letter

Month Day 2015

Date of school level meeting

Month Day 2015

List other school contacts made

Date submitted to District Attendance Contact

Month Day 2015

Date District Letter Mailed

Month Day 2015

District Parent Meeting Date* _

Month Day 2015

Judges in School Meeting Date

Month Day 2015

Date DSS contacted

Month Day 2015

Charges Filed

Month Day 2015

Additional Notes on Student

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