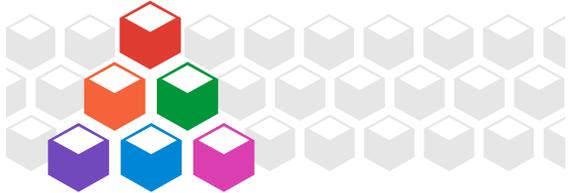




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Don't Call Them Dropouts

Understanding the Experiences of Young People
Who Leave High School Before Graduation

The Situation

- Approximately one-fifth of young people who begin 9th grade do not complete high school on time ,if ever.
- Young people who don't finish high school have few avenues for sharing their stories with adults, school professionals, community leaders, and policymakers.



Unexpected Emphases

- Family member health issues
- Unhealthy intimate relationships, gang memberships
- Lack of shared communication with adults
- School policies that impeded their efforts to stay engaged





★ Non graduates Are Growing Up in Toxic Environments

- Exposure to toxic environments can lead to toxic stress.
- Toxic stress has been found to have substantial, detrimental effects on the brain architecture of young children, the health and wellness of children and youth, and the ability of children and youth to effectively cope with future stressful events.





Non graduates Are Growing Up in Toxic Environments

- Family violence and abuse
- School safety
- Neighborhood violence
- Family health challenges
- Unsupportive or unresponsive school policies.





Interrupted Enrollment Risk Factors Reported by Respondents

- 87% = Homelessness
- 79% = Incarcerated Parent
- 50% = Moving Homes
- 50% = Changing Schools
- 11% = Foster Care

Giving extra support to students in these circumstances could build on their strengths in ways that help them stay in or return to school.





★ Connectedness to others Matter (risk and protective factor)

- Across all 16 group interview cities, young people mention support and guidance from adults as a factor that influences their decisions about school. “Absent family” and “adults in school” (versus adults generally) came up in 14 of the 16 group interview cities.





Connectedness to others Matter (risk and protective factor)

- Parents left young people “against their will” in 10 of the cities due to incarceration.
- Survey data confirms that this situation has a strong impact on school completion; when comparing interrupted-enrollment with continuous-enrollment respondents, parental incarceration was associated with a 79% greater likelihood of leaving school.





Non graduates Bounce Back, and Need More Support to Reach Up

- Despite their many strengths, the young people we interviewed could not reach beyond immediate needs without additional support from both caring adults and connected institutions in their communities.





Non graduates Bounce Back, and Need More Support to Reach Up

- All but 36% of the interrupted enrollment survey respondents had completed high school; 18% had completed at least some post-secondary education.
- Almost half were employed either full — or part-time. Of those who were not employed, 23% were in school. In the context of the adverse life events evident in the quantitative and qualitative data, these achievements demonstrate enormous strength and resilience.





Conclusions

- **Students who leave school before graduating are stronger than popular opinion and current research literature describe. These strengths could, with the right supports, allow them to stay in school; and these abilities do, ultimately, help many to re-engage**





Conclusions

- **Students who leave school before graduating are often struggling with overwhelming life circumstances that push school attendance far down their priority lists.**





Conclusions

- **Young people who leave high school need fewer easy exits from the classroom and more easy on-ramps back into education.**
- **Young people who leave high school emphasize how much peers, parents, and other adults matter.**
- **Everyone in a young person’s life and community can do something to help.**





Discussion: Your Turn

- Next we will discuss the recommendations provided by the authors of this report.
 - Read the recommendation
 - Think about some examples of how this recommendation might be carried out in your school
 - Share two examples with the group