



# Building a Grad Nation

Progress and Challenge  
in Ending the High School  
Dropout Epidemic

## Executive Summary

Annual Update  
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*A report by*  
Civic Enterprises  
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# Executive Summary

This report shows that high school graduation rates continue to improve nationally and across many states and school districts, with 12 states accounting for the majority of new graduates over the last decade. Tennessee and New York continue to lead the nation with double-digit gains in high school graduation rates over the same period. The number of “dropout factory” high schools—and the number of students attending them—has also declined significantly over the last decade, particularly within suburbs and towns and in the South, and at a more accelerated rate within cities in recent years.

Other progress on the “Civic Marshall Plan” to build a Grad Nation, including progress in meeting the goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate for the Class of 2020, gives us hope that these positive trends can continue. One state has now met the national high school graduation rate goal and another state has nearly done so; improvements are being made against the early benchmarks of the plan; and a significant number of institutions with reach into schools and communities are aligning their efforts with the Civic Marshall Plan’s benchmarks.

Although some states and school districts show that the dropout crisis can be solved, other states and districts are lagging, with 10 states having lower high school graduation rates recently compared to earlier in the decade. The pace across the country must be accelerated more than three-fold to meet the national goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the Class of 2020. The strong relationship between education and the economy frames this year’s report to reinforce what is at stake in strengthening our nation and preserving access to the American Dream for generations to come.

## EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY

The high school dropout crisis in the United States claims more than one million students each year, costing individuals the loss of potential earnings and the nation hundreds of billions of dollars in lost revenue, lower economic activity and increased social services.<sup>1</sup> With a national graduation rate of more than 75 percent in 2009—up from 72 percent in 2001—nearly one in four Americans, and four in 10 minorities, do not complete high school with their class.<sup>2</sup> Better educational outcomes would lead to greater economic returns.

### **Improving high school and college graduation rates helps individuals financially and the economy as a whole.**

- **Higher educational attainment results in higher earnings for individuals.** On average, high school graduates will earn \$130,000 more over their lifetimes than high school dropouts.<sup>3</sup> The dropouts from the Class of 2011 would have generated up to \$154 billion in additional earnings over their lives had they graduated from high school.<sup>4</sup>
- **Higher educational attainment lowers costs to taxpayers.** Moving just one student from dropout status to graduate status would yield more than \$200,000 in higher tax revenues and lower government expenditures over his or her lifetime.<sup>5</sup> Graduating half of one class of dropouts would save the U.S. taxpayer \$45 billion in that year.<sup>6</sup>

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- **Education can help close the skills gap and ensure America remains globally competitive.** Over the next decade, the nation needs 22 million students to earn a college degree to meet the demands of the workforce, but America is expected to fall short of this goal by at least three million.<sup>7</sup> More than 53 percent of business leaders at large companies and 67 percent at small companies say it is difficult to recruit employees in the U.S. with the skills, training, and education their companies need, despite unemployment at over 8 percent and millions of Americans seeking jobs.<sup>8</sup>
- **Improved education boosts the nation's economic growth.** If each state had met the Civic Marshall Plan goal of a 90 percent graduation rate, there would have been more than 580,000 additional high school graduates from the Class of 2011. These additional graduates would have earned \$6 billion more in income with a high school diploma as compared to their earnings as dropouts. This would have created a ripple effect through the national economy, generating more than 37,000 new jobs and increasing the gross domestic product by \$6.6 billion.

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## THE CIVIC MARSHALL PLAN TO BUILD A GRAD NATION

Launched by America's Promise Alliance in 2010, Grad Nation is now a large and growing movement of dedicated organizations, individuals, and communities working to end America's dropout crisis. As a key part of the larger Grad Nation campaign, the Civic Marshall Plan sets two national goals over the next decade, establishes research-based benchmarks for assessing progress, and mobilizes national, state, and community stakeholders to focus their efforts on the schools with low graduation rates.

### The Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation has two clear goals:

- A 90 percent nationwide high school graduation rate for the Class of 2020 (at 75.5 percent for the Class of 2009<sup>9</sup>, an approximately 1.3 percentage point increase per year is needed through 2020).
- The highest college attainment rates in the world, with at least six in 10 students earning a college degree by 2020 (up from three in 10 today<sup>10</sup>).

**The nation is making progress in the effort to build a Grad Nation. High school graduation rates are improving.** The Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) that all states will soon be using will enable accurate and common measurement of high school graduation rates across all high schools, school districts, and states.<sup>11</sup> Graduation rates under the ACGR are not yet available for all states, so this report continues to use both the Averaged Freshmen Graduation Rate (AFGR) and Promoting Power to measure progress in meeting some of the most important elements of the Civic Marshall Plan.

- **The graduation rate improved in the first decade of the 21st Century.** The nation's graduation rate increased three and a half percentage points from 2001 to 2009, and inched up half of a percentage point to 75.5 percent from 2008 to 2009. Wisconsin became the first state to achieve the Civic Marshall Plan goal of a 90 percent high school graduation rate and Vermont is only 0.4 of a point shy of this goal at 89.6 percent.
- **The number of dropout factory high schools and the number of students who attend them are declining.** There were 457 fewer dropout factory high schools in 2010 than in 2002, a 23 percent decline. During this period, 790,000 fewer students attended dropout factory high schools. From 2009 to 2010, the number

of dropout factories fell from 1,634 to 1,550. The rate of decline in the number of dropout factories and the number of students attending them was significantly faster between 2008 and 2010 than it was between 2002 and 2008.

- **The rate of improvement has not been fast enough to achieve the goal of a 90 percent national graduation rate by the Class of 2020.** If the rate of progress achieved during the first decade of the 21st Century continues during the second decade, the nation's graduation rate will be closer to 80 percent than 90 percent. There will still be more than 1,000 high schools in which the odds of graduating are about a 50/50 proposition.
- **There are state leaders and laggards in improving high school graduation rates. About half the states made gains in the past year and half did not.** There are 12 states whose efforts accounted for the majority of additional high school graduates, collectively accounting for 104,000 of the nation's 134,000 additional graduates in 2009.
  - **The leaders are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin.** Tennessee and New York continued to lead the way, each seeing nearly an average two percentage-point improvement per year. As a result, they are the only states to achieve double-digit gains since this research began in 2002, with 18 (Tennessee) and 13 (New York) percentage-point increases.
  - **The lagging states are Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, New Jersey, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, Rhode Island and Utah—all states with lower high school graduation rates in 2009 than in 2002.**

**Progress and Challenge in Meeting Key Benchmarks of the Civic Marshall Plan.** To ensure the Class of 2020 reaches a high school graduation rate of 90 percent, the Civic Marshall Plan Leadership Council established a phased approach with clear goals and benchmarks for the years ahead. The effort is data-driven, community-based, and organized at the local, state, and national levels. This Annual Update reports on the progress the country is making on these benchmarks. It also highlights key successes, opportunities, and challenges for the nation.

#### **Benchmarks: Elementary and Middle School Years (2012–2016)**

- **Substantially increase the number of students reading with proficiency by 4th grade.**
  - **Progress:** From 2000 to 2011, modest gains were made in reading achievement. The percent of America's 4th-graders scoring at or above proficient in reading increased from 29 percent in 2000 to 34 percent in 2011, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).<sup>12</sup>
  - **Challenge:** More than 65 percent of 4th-graders continue to score below proficiency in reading.
- **Reduce chronic absenteeism.**
  - **Progress:** The importance of school attendance and the multiple negative consequences of chronic absenteeism are gaining national attention. Many mayors have taken up the cause, with positive initial results. Champions include Baltimore, Boston, New York City, and San Antonio.

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**The battle to meet the national high school graduation rate goal will be won or lost in 13 states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Washington.** These states have the largest numbers of students to get back on track to graduate *and* they need to be the most aggressive in accelerating their graduation rate by 2020.



- **Challenge:** Despite the importance of addressing chronic absenteeism, few states currently report chronic absenteeism rates at the state, district, and school levels or hold districts and schools accountable for it.
- **Establish early warning indicator and intervention systems that use the early predictors of potential dropout (attendance, behavior, and course performance in reading and math).<sup>13</sup>**
  - **Progress:** In the past few years, Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems (EWS) have grown from a powerful idea into an actionable, high-priority and research-based reform effort. One-third of states currently have all of the information for EWS in their state longitudinal data systems.
  - **Challenge:** The next step is high-quality implementation of EWS—at scale. Sixteen states report that they have no plans or have not set a date for implementing an EWS.
- **Redesign the middle grades to foster high student engagement and preparation for rigorous high school courses.**
  - **Progress:** The past year has seen growing recognition of the critical role the middle grades play in enabling all students to graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and civic life. Major initiatives include the Bush Institute’s Middle Grades Matter, the Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Education, and New York City’s Chancellor’s Middle Grade Initiative.
  - **Challenge:** According to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, “The middle grade years have been called the ‘Bermuda Triangle’ of K-12 education. It’s the time when students sink or swim.”<sup>14</sup> In high-poverty schools, in particular, the middle grades can either put students on a path to college and careers—or they can steer them to dropping out and to unemployment.
- **Provide *sustained and quality* adult and peer support to all students who want and need these supports, continual supports from adults serving in schools as “success coaches” for all off-track students, and intensive wraparound supports for the highest-need students.**
  - **Progress:** Several state and local *Mentoring Partnerships*, most notably the Massachusetts Mentoring Partnership and the Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota, have instituted quality-based mentoring initiatives. Success Mentors of New York City and City Year corps members are providing daily supports—mentoring, tutoring, coaching, and more—to promote student success and are getting good initial results. The site coordinator/case-managed support system of Communities in Schools has been recognized as a model for dropout prevention.

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- **Challenge:** There are irregular and limited funding sources at the state and federal levels for continuous in-school supports for off-track students and continued wraparound services for the highest-need students. This limits the scale of effective programs.

#### Benchmarks: High School Years (2017-2020)

- **Provide transition supports for struggling students in grades 8-10 in all schools with graduation rates below 75 percent, as well as their feeder middle and elementary schools.**

- **Progress:** A recent study by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, called *Dropout Prevention Services and Programs in Public Schools and Districts, 2010 to 2011*, provides a welcome first glimpse at support for students across the country. Many forms of in-school support in group settings are available in the middle and upper grades, as is personalized support offered by school staff.<sup>15</sup>
- **Challenge:** Systems of support for students vary by region of the country, locale (city, suburbs, towns and rural areas), size of school district and grade level and they are far from pervasive.<sup>16</sup> In many cases, students moving to middle school receive only half as much help as students entering high school. Offerings are in many cases less available for students in rural areas.

- **Transform or replace the nation's high school dropout factories with effective schools.**

- **Progress:** The number of dropout factory high schools declined by 84 from 2009 to 2010 and by 457 since 2002. The number of students enrolled in dropout factory high schools declined at an even faster rate, with 204,000 fewer students enrolled in these schools in 2010 than in 2009, and 790,000 fewer since 2002. Federal School Improvement Grants continued to target high schools with graduation rates below 60 percent and their feeder middle schools. The U.S. Department of Education formally established a School Turnaround office.
- **Challenge:** 1,550 high school dropout factories remain and at current rates of progress, more than 1,000 dropout factories will continue to exist by 2020. In some districts, multiple dropout factories exist.

- **Raise the compulsory school attendance age to when students graduate or age 18 in all states, coupled with support for struggling students.**

- **Progress:** Of the states with graduation rates above the national average, 63 percent have a compulsory school age law of 17 or 18. The majority of states now have a compulsory school age of 17 or 18 and in the past decade alone, 12 states such as Indiana, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island have updated their laws by increasing the legal dropout age.<sup>17</sup> Some states, such as Tennessee and West Virginia, are following the recommendations of the National Conference of State Legislatures and creatively linking the compulsory school age law with enforcement, such as the suspension of drivers licenses.<sup>18</sup> Legislation has been introduced in states such as Alaska, Delaware, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, and Wyoming to update their compulsory schooling laws.<sup>19</sup> In his 2012 State of the Union Address, President Obama urged states to raise their compulsory school age laws to when students graduate or 18.

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- **Challenge:** Eighteen states have not updated their laws, most of which were written when a high school diploma was not necessary for most jobs, and still permit students to drop out at the age of 16 even though a high school diploma and some college are now needed for most jobs.
- **Provide all students (including those who have dropped out) clear pathways from high school to college and career training.**
  - **Progress:** At the 2011 Grad Nation Summit, Vice President Biden challenged all 50 governors to hold college completion summits. Since that time, much progress has been made: the U.S. Department of Education released its College Competition Toolkit, and through Complete College America's Completion Innovation Challenge, 10 states are implementing innovative, high-impact reforms to significantly boost student success and close achievement gaps for low-income students and minorities.<sup>20</sup> The College Board's State Capitals Campaign has held events in 13 cities.
  - **Challenge:** Only three in 10 (32 percent) 25- to 29-year-olds in the U.S. have attained a bachelor's degree.<sup>21</sup>
- **Support comprehensive dropout recovery programs for disconnected youth.**
  - **Progress:** The White House Council for Community Solutions issued a report to highlight the numbers and economic costs of youth ages 16-24 who are out of school and work, and highlighted a national survey of such youth with recommendations on how best to reconnect them, including through an employer toolkit to help more companies hire and train these youth.<sup>22</sup> Significant efforts are underway to give these youth a second chance to complete their secondary education and some college and to reconnect them to productive work, such as YouthBuild, YearUp, Transfer Schools in New York City, and Youth Connection Charter Schools in Chicago.
  - **Challenge:** An estimated one in six, or 6.7 million, of the 38.9 million youth ages 16-24, are disconnected from the two institutions that give them hope for the future—school and work.<sup>23</sup> These youth face severe challenges—many grew up in poverty and were raised by a single parent, and very few grew up in households with a parent who graduated from college. They cost taxpayers \$1.6 trillion and society \$4.7 trillion over their lifetimes, and represent significant untapped potential for the nation.<sup>24</sup>

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## PATHS FORWARD

The first Building a Grad Nation report in 2010 outlined a comprehensive set of policies and strategies to boost high school graduation rates. The landscape between federal and state policy is shifting and state efforts are becoming even more critical. In light of these changes and to capture new opportunities, supplemental federal policy recommendations and essential state strategies are highlighted here. The appendices include additional paths forward, including research gaps and ways each person can help build a Grad Nation.

**Support Federal Policies to Promote High School Graduation for College and Career Readiness.** Considering the persistent achievement gap and dropout crisis, federal education policy must be improved, ideally through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and if necessary, through temporary waivers issued by the U.S. Department of Education.

- **Promote college and career ready standards.** States have recently adopted college- and career-ready standards, and their leadership should be reinforced by policy at the federal level, including support for assessments aligned to these standards. States and schools that are increasing high school graduation rates are rising to a standard of excellence and ensuring a more rigorous curriculum that prepares students for college and career.
- **Ensure 21st Century accountability for all students.** Federal education policy should direct states to implement accountability systems that promote continuous improvement of all students and schools. Accountability systems should include all schools and all students, and tailor reform to schools' and students' specific needs. Graduation rates should be given equal weight to measures of achievement in order to avoid potential negative consequences of an accountability system based solely on standardized tests (e.g. the incentive to "push out" low-performing students in order to increase test scores).
- **Support effective improvement strategies that leverage community resources.** Federal policy should support state and district level systems for secondary school reform, including diagnosing problems and assessing capacity to determine the specific needs and potential resources to strengthen student achievement; targeted assistance for schools with achievement or graduation gaps; whole school transformation or replacement for chronically underperforming schools; and partnerships with nonprofit organizations and others to leverage resources.
- **Launch a Race to the Top: Secondary School Challenge.** Building on the success of previous Race to the Top efforts, including the Early Learning Challenge Fund, the Administration should launch a Race to the Top Secondary School Challenge focusing on several key areas of systemic reform to
  - Raise the compulsory school age to 18 or the age when students graduate;
  - Transform the pipeline of low-performing middle schools that feed into low-performing high schools;
  - Implement 21st Century education models in high schools to prepare students for college and careers;
  - Integrate the education, workforce and social support systems to put disconnected youth back on track toward education and employment success;
  - Ensure accountability at the high school level that promotes college- and career-readiness;
  - Implement Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems that identify and support both students who are off-track for high school graduation and not yet on-track for post-secondary success; and,

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- Create accelerated pathways to post-secondary success by encouraging school systems and state university systems to collaborate.

**Support Federal Policies to Promote the Success of Opportunity Youth<sup>25</sup>:** There are millions of youth ages 16 to 24 who are out of school and out of work, costing the nation billions of dollars every year and over their lifetimes in lost productivity and increased social services. If they can be re-engaged in school and work, these “opportunity youth” represent an opportunity for the nation to increase productivity and fill a critical skills gap.

- **Forge youth opportunity pathways.** Youth Opportunity Grants should target low-income communities, foster community collaboration among multiple sectors, and adopt systemic approaches to re-enrolling dropouts into local charter or “back on track” schools or programs focused on dropout re-engagement and preparation for the labor market.
- **Reinvest in success: Reward and scale up effective programs.** All existing comprehensive programs designed for opportunity youth that have been shown to be effective and have waiting lists should be expanded to re-engage all the young people seeking a chance to get back on track.
- **Measure performance and ensure accountability.** The U.S. Government should more regularly collect and report information on youth who are disconnected from school and work, at least annually through the Current Population Survey or American Community Survey.
- **Encourage employers to train and hire opportunity youth.** The federal government took a step in that direction by authorizing the Disconnected Youth Opportunity Tax Credit (DYOTC) in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2010. This approach needs to become permanent and, rather than just rewarding employers for hiring opportunity youth, it should include incentives for employers to provide a range of valuable experiences to youth.




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**Leverage National Service as a Cross-Cutting Solution.** National service has a proven track record of harnessing “people power” to accelerate academic achievement—both for those individuals enrolled in national service programs and for those they serve. National service is also a good bridge to full employment. The Corporation for National and Community Service is placing a greater emphasis on identifying strategies and programs that work, funding them, and driving innovation in education to build a Grad Nation. To this end, the funding and development of these programs should be supported.

- **Improve our nation’s lowest-performing schools to promote high school completion.** In high-poverty, low-performing schools and high schools with low graduation rates, large numbers of students often require intensive supports, which many schools do not have the capacity to provide. Policymakers should encourage districts and schools to partner with national service organizations and scale up national service positions that provide below-poverty stipends and education awards in exchange for a full year of national service as outlined in the bipartisan Edward M. Kennedy Serve America law.
- **Re-engaging opportunity youth.** National service programs also improve outcomes for opportunity youth through job training and skill-building opportunities, and have a record of setting participants on a successful career path. These programs should be strengthened and scaled.

**Advance State Strategies to Accelerate Improvements.** The federal government can play a powerful role in education, but 90 percent of education dollars are controlled at the state and local levels.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, we make the following 10 recommendations to state-level stakeholders.

- **Understanding the graduation rate in communities and states.** There are many estimates of graduation rates, but most do not accurately capture the extent of the dropout crisis. See Part 2 of this report to find out which states and communities are using the adjusted cohort graduation rate method. Additional information on how states are doing, as measured by the Civic Marshall Plan Indices, is available at [www.every1graduates.org](http://www.every1graduates.org)
- **Investing smartly in education.** State budgets are tight, but the economic costs of failing to invest are greater. The waiver process from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) provides states flexibility on how to spend some of the federal education dollars. These dollars should be strategically invested in evidence-based programs for school readiness, school improvement and student support. States and corporations should invest to strengthen the link between high schools, community colleges and technical institutes, and employers to prepare young people for entry into skilled occupations. To learn more, see the Alliance for Excellent Education’s and the Economy project available at [www.all4ed.org/publication\\_material/Econ](http://www.all4ed.org/publication_material/Econ)
- **Transparency in the NCLB Waivers and waiver process.** These waivers, if granted, can affect policies at the school, district and state levels. Additional information on these waivers is available in the recent brief by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, *Creating a College and Career Readiness Accountability Model for High Schools*, available at [www.nga.org/cms/center](http://www.nga.org/cms/center)
- **Raising the compulsory school age to when students graduate or 18.** Existing research shows that raising the compulsory school age acts as a constraint on dropping out and boosts earnings. The report, *The Case for Reform: Raising the Compulsory School Attendance Age*, provides research and information from state legislators and governors on how these laws have been recently updated in certain states, available at [www.civicenterprises.net/reports/the\\_case\\_for\\_reform.pdf](http://www.civicenterprises.net/reports/the_case_for_reform.pdf)

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**The federal government can play a powerful role in education, but 90 percent of education dollars are controlled at the state and local levels. Therefore, we make the following 10 recommendations to state-level stakeholders.**

- **Learning from models of success like Tennessee and New York.** Reform efforts should benefit from models of success and help promote the use of evidence-based strategies, school turnaround and replacement models, and research-based interventions. The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) is a central source of scientific evidence for what works in education, available at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>
- **Doing a policy audit at the school, district, and state levels.** This audit should ensure basic school attendance, behavior and course passing policies support graduation for all. The Center for Public Education's *Guiding Questions* informs this process, available at [www.data-first.org/learning/guiding-questions](http://www.data-first.org/learning/guiding-questions)
- **Using longitudinal data systems to analyze graduation and dropout trends.** Efforts should be undertaken to examine a recent year's dropouts and analyze them by age and credits shy of graduation to identify which targeted strategies should be implemented to meet student needs. Such efforts can partner with an educational research institution, such as those listed in <http://drdc.uchicago.edu/links/education-links.html>
- **Putting early warning indicator and intervention systems in place in every district with a low graduation rate high school.** EWS should be in place no later than middle school. *On Track for Success: The Use of Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems* highlights best practices from across the country, available at [www.civicerprises.net/reports/on\\_track\\_for\\_success.pdf](http://www.civicerprises.net/reports/on_track_for_success.pdf)
- **Measuring and reporting on chronic absenteeism at the school, district, and state levels.** Collecting and reporting data on chronic absenteeism should become common practice at the school, district, and state levels. Efforts can be informed by the tools and strategies to promote attendance from Attendance Works, available at [www.attendanceworks.org/what-can-i-do](http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-can-i-do)
- **Developing a State Civic Marshall Plan.** Creating results-driven partnerships with key leaders in the state who are interested in cradle to career education efforts is essential to success. States should work to identify major assets and needs related to the Civic Marshall Plan benchmarks, mobilize key partners in the state to align their efforts with those benchmarks, and report results every year. The Leadership Council of the Civic Marshall Plan to Build a Grad Nation can support these efforts (please see Appendix K for a list of Leadership Council Members).

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**Putting early warning indicator and intervention systems in place in every district with a low graduation rate high school. EWS should be in place no later than middle school. *On Track for Success: The Use of Early Warning Indicator and Intervention Systems* highlights best practices from across the country,**

## Conclusion

The economic crisis has refocused the nation's attention on the need to educate our young people. By doing so, we will be increasing their earnings, lowering costs to taxpayers, closing America's skills gap, and boosting the economy as a whole. Higher educational attainment is also a key answer to increasing social mobility at a time when worries mount about the ability of low-income Americans to climb the economic ladder and access the American Dream.

Two years into the Civic Marshall Plan to build a Grad Nation, the country can point to important progress nationally and across states and communities.

## Acknowledgments

Many individuals have been wonderfully helpful in sharing their experience to build a Grad Nation. We offer great thanks to them for their willingness to share lessons learned and next steps envisioned in their own organizations and for the country, including advisors in Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, Ohio, Texas, and Washington D.C. We express our utmost gratitude for the leadership and vision of General Colin and Mrs. Alma Powell, the America's Promise Alliance Trustees, and the Civic Marshall Plan Leadership Council, without whom the Grad Nation campaign would not be possible.

A special thanks to the staff, fellows, interns, and volunteers of the co-convening organizations: America's Promise Alliance, the Alliance for Excellent Education,

Examples of states and school districts that are beating the odds and increasing high school graduation rates continue to rise to a standard of excellence and serve as a challenge that others can emulate. Yet, while progress is strong, the nation's overall rates of increase in graduation rates are still too slow to stay on track to meet national goals. Millions of young people still fail to graduate on time, with huge consequences to them, the economy, and our society. It is time to redouble our efforts to ensure all children have access to a quality education and the chance to fulfill their dreams.

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## Endnotes

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### **About Civic Enterprises**

Civic Enterprises is a public policy firm that helps corporations, nonprofits, foundations, universities and governments develop and spearhead innovative public policies to strengthen our communities and country. Created to enlist the private, public and nonprofit sectors to help address our Nation's toughest problems, Civic Enterprises fashions new initiatives and strategies that achieve measurable results in the fields of education, civic engagement, economic mobility, and many other domestic policy issues. For information about Civic Enterprises, please visit [www.civicerprises.net](http://www.civicerprises.net)

### **About The Everyone Graduates Center**

The Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University seeks to identify the barriers that stand in the way of all students graduating from high school prepared for adult success, to develop strategic solutions to overcome the barriers, and to build local capacity to implement and sustain them. For more information, please visit [www.every1graduates.org](http://www.every1graduates.org)

### **About America's Promise Alliance**

America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. We bring together more than 400 national organizations representing nonprofit groups, businesses, communities, educators and policymakers. Through our Grad Nation campaign, we mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. Building on the legacy of our Founding Chairman General Colin Powell, America's Promise believes the success of young people is grounded in Five Promises: caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education; and opportunities to help others. For more information, visit [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org)

### **About The Alliance for Excellent Education**

The Alliance for Excellent Education is a Washington, DC-based national policy and advocacy organization that works to improve national and federal policy so that all students can achieve at high academic levels and graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship in the twenty-first century. For more information about the Alliance for Excellent Education, please visit [www.all4ed.org](http://www.all4ed.org)

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