



Education Committee – Introduced

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High School Drop-out Prevention Position
By Lowder

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Position Statement:

Increase the State of Iowa's legal school dropout age from the current 16 to 18.

Position: It is the Position of the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council that legislation to revise Iowa Code 299.1A to increase the State of Iowa's legal school dropout age from the current 16 to 18 will empower students to stay in school, to graduate and to change their futures.

Rationale: Legislators will see clear advantages, not only for the students who graduate from high school and earn their diploma, but also for their families and for the economic prosperity of our entire State.

First, while Iowa is one of the top States in the Nation in high school graduation rates, trends show that for the past decade one in ten Iowa seniors fail to complete high school in four years, this number was 3,650 students in 2012. Most states passed school attendance laws in the late 1800's and into the early 1900's, the law was started in a time when kids left school early to help parents on the farm and is now outdated. While Iowa is still primarily an agriculture State, we also have global significance; our students must finish high school for them to compete in the global work force. Not completing high school puts the future of the student, their families, and even our State at risk.

Secondly, those who do not graduate high school will often later be low-wage and low-skill workers or end up within Iowa's social service programs. The economic consequences for the student of dropping out are dramatic. Education pays! In the U.S., high school graduates earn over \$500,000 more over their lifetime than individuals without a high school diploma and research has shown a 10 percent rise in earnings for people who simply stay in school one year longer. Today half of a high school education is no longer enough.

Most importantly, many of those students who drop out at 16 are the most at risk students in our state. They often don't have support at home, their parent likely did not graduate high school, they may already be facing difficulty in school and they find it easy to just drop out at age 16 instead of staying to graduate. As such, we know increasing the legal age from 16 to 18 must be done with supportive dropout prevention and retention programs along with the necessary financial resources to create an effective and comprehensive approach.

Recommended Action: SIYAC encourages the General Assembly to change Iowa Code 299.1A to increase the legal drop out age to 18. We owe it to the future of our children and our State to do all we can to ensure every child in Iowa at minimum graduates from high school. The value to the students, their families and our State by increasing the legal drop out age is immeasurable.