

The Workplace

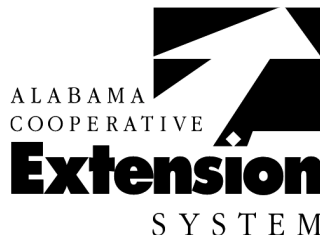
Highlights

Failure to complete high school:

- Limits lifelong earning potential.
- Makes finding and keeping a job harder.
- Increases the likelihood of receiving public assistance.

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Does Earning a High School Diploma Pay Dividends?

Traditionally, most people begin their first real job (i.e., chosen work, career field, or permanent job) around the age of 25. While many will change jobs and even careers several times, most of those entering the workforce in their twenties continue to work until they are 65 and are eligible to retire. If they have made wise career decisions and have planned well, retirement is the reward for a job well done. Sadly, for many retirement is almost impossible because of poor decisions, such as deciding to not finish high school or not go to college, made during youth.

Teens who decide not to finish high school, not to go to college, or not to pursue a technical degree may face potential hardships. When compared with high school graduates, dropouts will have less lifelong earning potential than their high school graduate counterparts (Table

1). Among people who are not high school graduates, average yearly income is \$12,447 (Table 2), or approximately \$239 per week, making them more likely to need public assistance.

Dropouts usually have difficulty finding and retaining jobs. Dropping out of high school to get a job may seem like an attractive alternative to sitting in class, doing homework, and studying for tests. Such a job might provide a quick solution to immediate money problems, but rarely do such jobs offer opportunities for

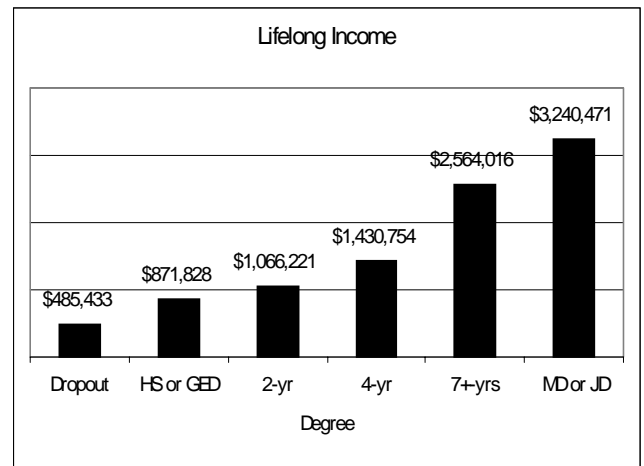


Table 1. The lifelong earning potential for a high school graduate is about 1.8 times that of a high school dropout.

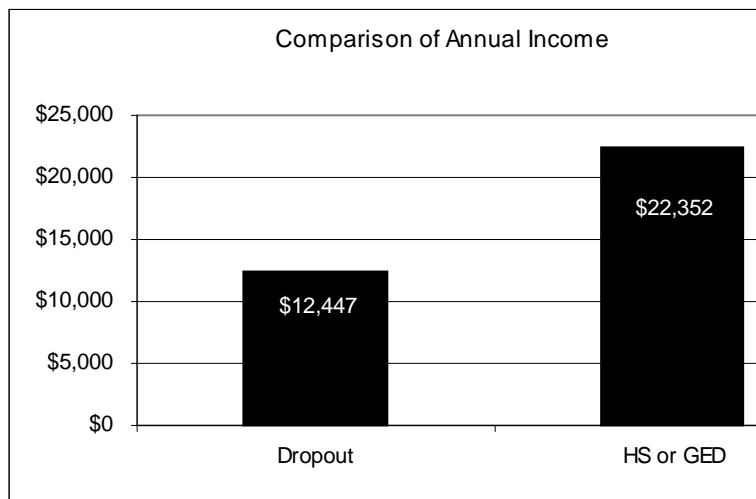


Table 2. A person with a high school diploma averages making over than \$9 thousand a year ore than a high school dropout.

advancement or benefits. Companies that tend to hire persons without a high school diploma also tend to pay lower wages for the same jobs than do companies requiring a diploma.

Why is it so difficult for dropouts to get and keep a job? There are two main reasons.

One reason that dropouts have trouble getting a job is that they often lack the basic job skills

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of reading, writing, math, communication and problem-solving. Without these core skills, their choice of jobs is very limited.

There was a time when a strong body and a willing spirit were enough to guarantee employment. With increasing emphasis on tech-

nical skills and more and more of the work once performed by employees now being accomplished by machines, these qualities simply may not be enough.

The other reason individuals without high school diplomas have trouble remaining employed is that often they lack a good work ethic and a good attitude. If they are late for work or fail to arrive on time without notice or if they have difficulty following directions and getting along with others, becoming unemployed is almost inevitable.

What can be done? First, stay in school. Get the basic skills essential to qualify for an entry level job or further training, i.e., reading, math and problem solving. Second, go to technical school or college. Third, practice good work ethic, i.e., get to school or work on time and do your best to do what is asked of you, and choose to have a positive attitude, i.e., try to get along with your supervisor and those with whom you work. Observe people who are considered successful and model their behavior. Fourth, find a mentor—someone who will work with you to help develop good work habits. Practice these habits until they become second nature. Fifth, ask for the support of your friends and family.

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