

Locating and Preventing the Dropout Crisis

How To Target and Transform the High Schools which Produce
the Nation's Dropouts

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Prepared for the Congressional Black Caucus Education Summit

July 23, 2007

An American Tragedy

- In too many locales half or more of the nation's minority students are failing to earn a high school diploma
- Most of these students attend high schools where graduating is not the norm
- In an era where Human Capital is the key to individual and societal success this is social and economic dynamite.
- It is the engine of the under-class

An American Transformation

- It is within our power to create high schools in which all students graduate prepared for success in college, career and civic life
- A focused and sustained effort to fix or replace the high schools which produce most of the nation's dropouts would bring enormous returns

The Benefits would be Much Greater than the Costs

- ❖ A recent study finds that our nation can recoup 45 billion dollars in lost tax revenues, health care expenditures, and social service outlays per high school class if we cut the number of high school dropouts in half (Levin et. al, 2007).

This is Possible

- We know which High Schools Produce half or more of all dropouts and up to 75% of minority dropouts
- We can identify the students who absent sustained and comprehensive supports will dropout, years before they dropout
- Effective Interventions Exist for Both Students and Schools
- The Challenge is to Bring the Interventions to All the Schools and Students who Need them
- The Nation has solved similar challenges

Step 1: Locate the Dropout Crisis

- There are approx. 2,000 (15%) High Schools which produce half or more of the nation's dropout's
- Most of these high schools have been reliably producing large number of dropouts for a decade or more
- This is why we have labeled them Dropout Factories

Where Are The Nation's Dropout Factories Located?

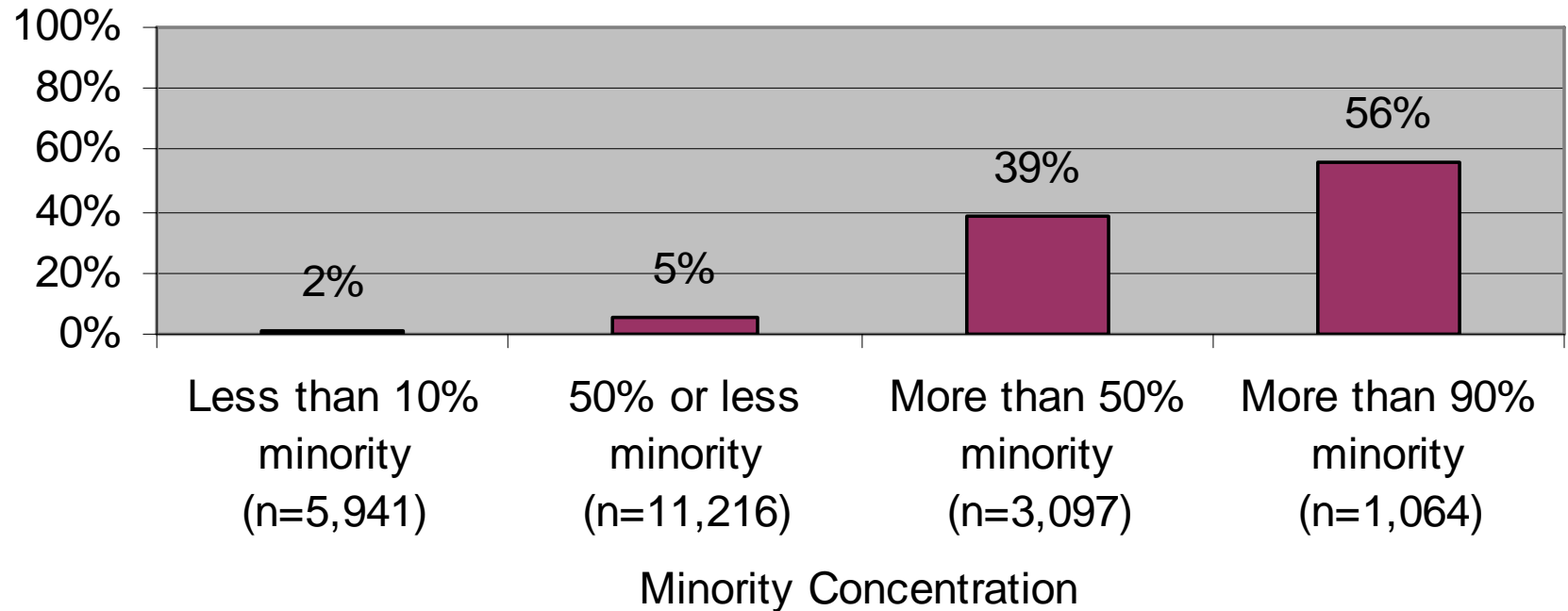
- About Half are Located in Northern, Midwestern and Western Cities
- The rest are primarily found throughout the South and Southwest
- 25% are the Only High School in their School Districts

Who Attends the Nation's Dropout Factories?

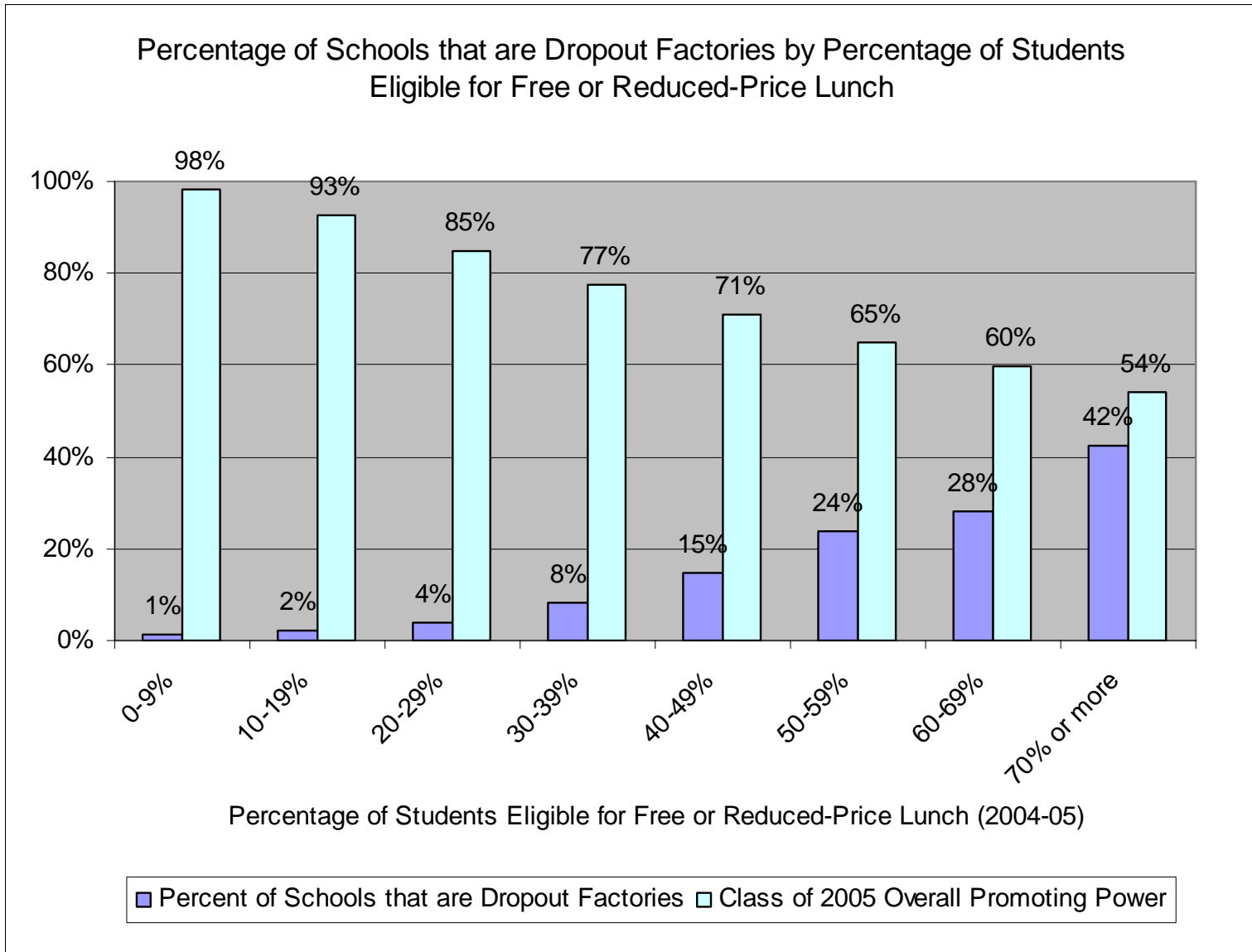
- Poor and Minority Students

Dropout Factories and Minority Concentration

Percentage of High Schools by Minority Concentration that are Dropout Factories



Poverty and Dropout Factories



Dropout Factories in CBC Districts

Number and percent of Congressional Black Caucus high schools in which high and low graduation rates and who attends them (2005-06)

	Total number of High schools	Percent of all High schools	Percent of minority students attending	Percent of Black students attending	Percent of White students attending	Percent of all students attending
High Schools with very low graduation rates (50% or below)	327	45.7%	57.1%	57.3%	21.2%	48.3%
High Schools with high graduation rates (90% or above)	92	12.5%	7.7%	6.6%	25.7%	12.1%

Note: New York high schools are not included in the analysis.

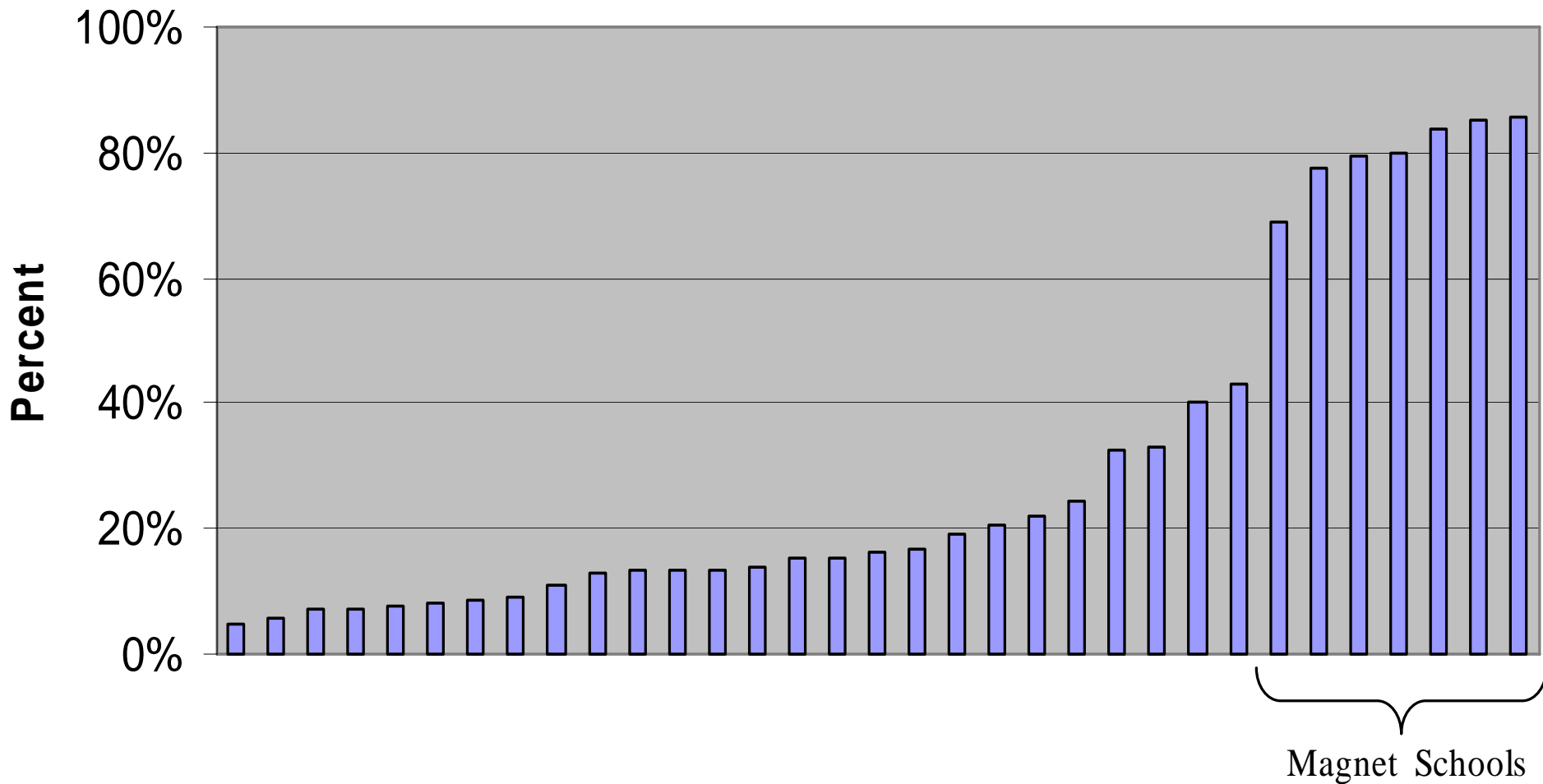
What Causes a High School to be a Dropout Factory?

- A fundamental Miss-Match between the Number of Students in Need of Academic and Social Supports in a High School and the Human Resources and Know How Available in the High School to Help Them

The Educational Challenge Faced by Dropout Factories

- Philadelphia Case Study-High Poverty Neighborhood High Schools vs Selective Admission Magnets

Percentage of 9th Graders who are On-Age, First Time Freshmen with 80%+ Attendance in 8th Grade and Math and Reading Skills at the 7th Grade Level or Higher by High School



Step 2-Understand Why High School Students Dropout?

Four Broad Types of Dropouts

- Life Events
- Fade Outs
- Push Outs
- Failing to Succeed-constitute majority of dropouts in dropout factories

Failing to Succeed Students -Follow a Predictable Path to Dropping Out

- ❖ Enter High School with Below Grade Level Skills, Middle Grade Course Failures, Poor Attendance Habits or Struggle with the Transition to High School
- ❖ Miss 20 or more days of the 9th grade, sometimes 10 of the first 30 days
- ❖ Fail Two or More and often Nearly All of their 1st Semester Courses.
- ❖ Do Not Earn Enough Credits to be Promoted to the 10th Grade
- ❖ Repeat 9th Grade, Fail Again
- ❖ Eventually Dropout, Perhaps after a Brief Transfer to another school

Failure to Succeed Dropouts

- ❖ Are Easily Identifiable Using Data Routinely Collected by Schools
- ❖ Can be Identified a Key Junctures of Secondary School When Their Odds for Success are About to Take a Turn for the Worse
- ❖ Often Persist in School for a Long Time before Dropping Out, Despite Years of Struggles

Philadelphia 8th Grade Indicators

- ❖ 8th Graders who Attend less than 80% of the Time and/or Fail Math and/or Fail English make up 54% of Philadelphia Dropouts
- ❖ Students Who Do Not Have 8th Grade Indicators but fail have poor attendance and fail two or more courses in 9th grade make up 22% of Philadelphia Dropouts
- ❖ Only 23% of Dropouts Do Not Have a 8th Grade or 9th Grade Indicator

Step 3-Effective Interventions for Schools and Student

We Can Transform the Nation's Dropout Factories

- What's Works Clearinghouse has identified 8 dropout prevention programs that have solid evidence of success
- General consensus among High School Reformers on the Key Elements of Effective Reform
- Growing Number of New Small School Success stories and Beat the Odds Large High Schools
- Research based Models of Comprehensive Whole School Reform for Low Performing High Schools
- Public Health Multi-Tiered Prevention and Intervention model

Talent Development High Schools Reform Components

❖ School Organization

- Ninth Grade Academy, Teacher Teams, Career Academies, Block Schedule, proactive attendance and climate strategies

❖ Curriculum/Instruction

- Double & Triple Dose Math and English
- Active Instruction
- Freshman Seminar (Study Skills)
- Integrated Career Themes
- College Prep Curriculum for All

❖ Staff Support

- Leadership Training
- Planning & Coaching

We Now Know That...

- ❖ Sustained implementation of a strong, comprehensive intervention at the high school level, with particular emphasis in the ninth grade, results in improvements in:
 - ❖ Climate
 - ❖ Attendance
 - ❖ Achievement
 - ❖ Course Passing
 - ❖ Grade Promotion
 - ❖ Career/College Ready
 - ❖ Graduation

We Also Know

- Most Low Performing High Schools will need additional resources and technical assistance to implement state of the art comprehensive reforms (\$600-\$1000 per pupil)
- It will take 4 to 5 years of sustained and focused effort to see large achievement and graduation rate gains (because 9th grade is where most student fall off track)
- We can know within two years if a school is on track to transformation by looking at attendance, course performance, grade to grade promotion, teacher quality, and percent of students taking high standards courses

Step 4: Bringing What Works and What is Needed to Scale

The Federal Role

- Measure Grad Rates Accurately and Make Them Count as much as Test Scores in NCLB (Every Students Counts Act HR 2955)
- Create and Fully Fund the Federal, State, and Local Partnership Needed to Fix or Replace the Nation's Dropout Factories (Graduation Promise Act HR 2928)
- Invest in Capacity Building (New Models, Increased Tech Assistance, Focused R and D)

The Community Role

- Understand Who Dropouts Out and Why
- Implement Comprehensive Supports at Four Key Transitions Points Pre-K to 2, 6-7, 9-10, and High School to College and Career
- Create the Coalition Needed for a Sustained Campaign to End the Dropout Crisis

For More Information

- Visit www.gradgap.org
- Contact rbalfanz@csos.jhu.edu

Good News

- ❖ Manageable number of schools and we can locate the bulk of the work
- ❖ Converging discourse on what needs to be done
- ❖ Increasing level of know how
- ❖ Growing leadership and support

Not Easy

- ❖ Need comprehensive and systemic approach to avoid isolated efforts that exacerbate inequity
- ❖ Consider multiple approaches as appropriate to context
- ❖ Develop and scale-up technical and human supports for transformation
- ❖ Align federal, state, district, and school-based efforts