

# LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION

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## PUBLIC SCHOOL DROPOUTS



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UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

REPORT TO THE  
1981 GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF NORTH CAROLINA

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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION  
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TO MEMBERS OF THE 1981 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Legislative Research Commission herewith reports to the 1981 General Assembly of North Carolina on the matter of Public School Dropouts. The report is made pursuant to Chapter 1039 of the 1979 Session Laws.

This report was prepared by the Legislative Research Commission Committee on Public School Dropouts, and it is transmitted by the Legislative Research Commission to the members of the 1981 General Assembly for their consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

  
W. Craig Layton

  
Carl J. Stewart, Jr.

Cochairmen

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION



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## INTRODUCTION

The Legislative Research Commission, created by Article 6B of Chapter 120 of the General Statutes, is authorized pursuant to the direction of the General Assembly "to make or cause to be made such studies of and investigations into governmental agencies and institutions and matters of public policy as will aid the General Assembly in performing its duties in the most efficient and effective manner" and "to report to the General Assembly the results of the studies made," which reports "may be accompanied by the recommendations of the Commission and bills suggested to effectuate the recommendations." G.S. 120-30.17. The Commission is co-chaired by the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and consists of five Representatives and five Senators, who are appointed respectively by the Cochairmen. G.S. 120-30.10(a).

Pursuant to G.S. 120-30.10(b) and (c), the Commission Co-chairmen appointed committees consisting of legislators and public members to conduct the studies authorized by the 1979 General Assembly. Each member of the Legislative Research Commission was delegated the responsibility of overseeing the progress of one or more studies and causing the findings and recommendations of the various study committees to be reported to the Commission. In addition, one Senator and one Representative from each committee were designated Cochairmen. (See Appendix A for a list of the Committee members.)

Ratified House Bill 409, enacted as Chapter 1039 of the 1979 Session Laws, (see Appendix B for a copy of Ratified House Bill 409) authorized the Legislative Research Commission to study (i) What are the causes of the high dropout rate in North Carolina in grades 8 to 12; (ii) Why so many North Carolina high school graduates fail to continue their education beyond the high school level; (iii) What

should and can be done to encourage students to remain in high school until they graduate; and (iv) What special factors, if any, have caused the dropout rate to be especially high in the western mountain counties comprising the Eighth Educational District, and what special solutions, if any, exist.

This final report of the Committee will address each of these matters in the following order:

- I. The gravity of the Public School Dropout Problem in North Carolina.
- II. What are the causes of the high dropout rate in North Carolina in grades 8-12?
- III. The Committee's determination of the primary factors contributing to the dropout ratio.
- IV. Why so many North Carolina high school graduates fail to continue their education beyond the high school level.
- V. What special factors cause the dropout rate to be especially high in Western Mountain Counties comprising the 8th Educational District, and what special solutions, if any, exist?
- VI. What should and can be done to encourage students to remain in high school until they graduate?



## COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

The Committee on Public School Dropouts has held a series of meetings over the period beginning October 17, 1979 to December 2, 1980. Copies of the minutes of each meeting and documents supporting this report may be obtained from the Legislative Library. An Interim report was presented to the 1979 General Assembly, Second Session 1980. A summary of its findings and recommendations as adopted by the Committee is attached as Appendix C and made a part of this final report.

To aid the Committee in its deliberations, various individuals, both from within and from outside of State government, were invited to make presentations to the Committee. These individuals generally were experts in one or more aspects of public education. They highlighted the gravity of the public school dropout problem in North Carolina and posited various solutions to combat the problem.

### FINDINGS

#### I. THE GRAVITY OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL DROPOUT PROBLEM IN NORTH CAROLINA

The Division of Statistical Services has compiled and furnished to the Committee the estimated annual high school dropout rate for the past five school years. The figures are as follows:

<u>School Years</u>	<u>Number of Dropouts</u>	<u>Annual Rate</u>
1975-1976	28,264	7.5%
1976-1977	29,422	7.9%
1977-1978	30,008	8.1%
1978-1979	29,431	8.0%
1979-1980	28,090	7.8%

From a selected sample of thirteen school systems, the Division's figures also reveal that urban areas tend to have a lower percentage of the total number of high school students who drop out. Indeed, the North Carolina Extended School Day Association observed that over one third (1/3) of the total number of persons who dropped out of school during the 1977 school year were from "city" areas of the State.<sup>1</sup>

The table on the following page was prepared from the information furnished to the Committee by the Division of Statistical Services. It lists the dropout numbers and percentages for four school years, 1976 to 1980, in thirteen large cities and counties.

<sup>1</sup> See "A Report to the Legislative Research Commission Committee on Public School Dropouts" by Kay Foley, N. C. Extended School Day Association, December 5, 1979.

	School Years 1976-1980			
	1976 to 1977	1977 to 1978	1978 to 1979	1979 to 1980
Large City-County				
Raleigh-Wake County	1246	1297 7.3%	1279 7.1%	1334 7.5%
Wilmington-New Hanover County	578	535 8.2%	492 7.5%	496 7.6%
Greenville-Pitt County	381	392 7.3%	322 6.1%	321 6.2%
Jacksonville-Onslow County	409	344 6.4%	326 6.2%	309 6.0%
Goldsboro-Wayne County	467	432 6.8%	390 6.0%	371 5.6%
Fayetteville-Cumberland County	1097	1092 6.8%	1049 6.6%	1019 6.6%
Sanford-Lee County	164	175 7.3%	124 5.2%	145 6.1%
Greensboro-High Point-Guilford County	1561	1523 7.5%	1552 7.6%	1527 7.8%
Winston-Salem-Forsyth County	895	893 6.0%	822 5.6%	794 5.5%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg County	1893	1880 7.6%	2035 8.2%	2044 8.5%
Gastonia-Gaston County	945	964 9.9%	953 10.0%	896 9.6%
Hickory-Newton-Catawba County	461	504 8.1%	475 7.8%	434 7.2%
Asheville-Buncombe County	810	861 9.3%	811 8.7%	715 7.9%

The dropout problem, as the North Carolina Extended School Day Association notes, is most severe in the rural areas of the State. In those rural less affluent geographic areas a higher percentage of students tend to drop out. The figures prepared by the Division of Statistical Services generally validates this observation. The table below identifies fourteen largely rural school systems which generally had the highest dropout rates in the State for the school years 1976 through 1980.

	School Years 1976 to 1980			
	1976 to 1977	1977 to 1978	1978 to 1979	1979 to 1980
Burke County	421 10.0%	425 10.1%	405 9.8%	379 9.5%
Currituck County	87 11.5%	66 8.8%	70 8.9%	82 11.3%
Durham County	407 7.7%	490 9.2%	441 8.3%	440 8.2%
Durham City	445 14.2%	399 13.5%	411 14.5%	342 12.6%
Edgecombe County	208 10.5%	189 9.6%	164 8.4%	194 9.6%
Fairmont	92 11.2%	94 11.5%	87 11.2%	83 10.6%
Hoke County	164 11.7%	145 10.4%	154 11.7%	136 10.8%
Kinston	173 10.2%	150 8.7%	191 11.2%	142 8.9%
McDowell County	260 12.2%	250 12.1%	205 10.2%	193 9.3%
Monroe	100 11.0%	94 9.6%	92 9.4%	101 10.3%
Mooresville	98 11.7%	64 8.4%	64 9.0%	65 8.5%
Pasquotank County	207 10.2%	246 12.2%	223 11.5%	200 11.1%
Perquimans County	85 12.1%	71 10.6%	55 8.6%	54 8.3%
Randolph County	421 10.6%	487 12.2%	405 10.2%	378 9.6%
Weldon	65 11.3%	45 8.3%	51 9.4%	45 8.4%

II. What are the causes of the high dropout rate in North Carolina in grades 8 to 12?

The Instructional Services Area of the State Department of Public Instruction in its publication, The Dropout Problem in the Public Schools of North Carolina, January 1, 1980, Raleigh, N.C., dealt extensively with the question of the causes for the high dropout rate among North Carolina high school students. The Department of Public Instruction publication notes that numerous studies conducted in North Carolina as well as other states have attempted to identify the causes of dropouts. There is a general agreement on the basic factors which contribute to the dropout problem but there is disagreement as to their rank of importance. See Page 4. The contributing factors, these studies agree, are: (a) a deficiency in basic skills, (b) poor attendance, (c) lack of parental support, (d) the need to work on the part of the student, (e) health problems, and (f) lack of advocacy. Page 4.

A 1974 Senate subcommittee of the N.C. General Assembly identified, (a) poor negative self-image by the student, (b) an irrelevant curriculum, and (c) poorly developed reading and communication skills, as the most frequently cited causes for dropping out. See Report of the Subcommittee to Study School Dropouts in North Carolina, 1974.

The subcommittee report also noted that (1) a low motivation to learn, (2) continual academic failure, (3) discrepancy in the backgrounds of teachers and students, and (4) inadequate training of teachers to handle a wide range of abilities in their students, were the second most cited causes for dropping out. Finally, the subcommittee noted that: financial need to work on the part

of some students, a lack of preparation prior to entering first grade for some children, parental fear and uncertainty in approaching the school, lack of co-curricular or aesthetic courses, failure to continue special education programs beyond the elementary level, and the need to modernize vocation programs, all were factors which contributed to the high dropout rate.

The Division of State Budget and Management conducted a citizens survey which indicated that the need for employment, family problems, and lack of interest in school were the primary reasons for dropping out of school. That survey also noted that marriage, pregnancy<sup>2</sup> and low academic achievement were among the other reasons students failed to continue their high school education.

<sup>2</sup> The Committee investigated the extent to which pregnancy contributed to the dropout problem in North Carolina. No information was available which gave any clear picture of this causative factor. However, it was learned from the Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth, that each year in North Carolina 26,000 teenage women 10 to 19 years of age become pregnant. See Comments by John S. Niblock, Executive Director, Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth, to the Committee, November 12, 1980.

The Council has prepared a report entitled, "Teenage Pregnancy in North Carolina - Better Choices for a Better Future", June 1980. The report notes that early child bearing among teenagers is associated with "significant and lifelong educational losses." Only two of ten women who first become mothers at age 17 or younger ever complete high school. Pregnancy, the report says "was found to be the major reason for dropping out of school."

The North Carolina School Counselors Association conducted a survey of a random sample of a number of its members to determine what are the major contributing factors to the school dropout problem in North Carolina.<sup>3</sup> The survey indentified four major factors, These are:

1. "The role of the family in today's society".

Under this general heading it was noted among other things, that there was no incentive from the family to become educationally successful.

2. "Trends in our current society that cause dropouts."

Here it was noted, (a) that materialism is a predominate value for high school students, (b) that teacher training is inadequate in the areas of developing positive self-concepts for students, (c) that North Carolina has instituted the High School Competency Testing program and (d) that there is a permissive sexual attitude and drug use among young adults and middle school students.

3. The inadequacies of money spent per child in different geographical locations of the State. See also Part IV.

4. Curricula concerns.

Here it was explained that students in K-3 fall behind in basic skills, and that by age sixteen they are so far behind that leaving school seems to be the only alternative.

Dr. Brenda Moon, an institutional researcher at Guilford Technical Institute, noted "Dropping out is related to a child's living status." This, she said, involved among other things (1) the number of parents living in the home, (2) the sibling relationship, (3) the economic status, (4) the level of school

<sup>3</sup> See, Dropout Concerns, Dr. Cheryl Posner-Cahill, and Ms. Ruth C. McSwain, North Carolina School Counselors Association.

involvement, and (4) the level of commitment to education. In support of this assertion, Dr. Moon pointed out that "a child is more likely to experience problems which will ultimately lead to dropping out if he/she is from a broken home. This can be a home where separation, divorce or even death of a parent has occurred." See Guilford County Dropout Assessment Project, General Data Collection Findings (Presented to the Committee November 12, 1980).

III. The Committee's determination of the primary factors contributing to the dropout ratio.

The Committee does not take issue with any of the causative factors presented as contributing to the serious high school dropout problem faced by North Carolina. Indeed, all of the arguments advanced in support of the various causes are convincing; and the Committee believes that these causes warrant the attention of the State Board of Education and the local boards of education. It is obvious to the Committee that there is no single reason which can explain why so many of North Carolina's high school students drop out.

In order to assure that the State's resources are channeled into the areas with the greatest need and to assure that those resources are utilized in the most efficient manner, the Committee has adopted the following as the primary factors which contribute to the high dropout rate among North Carolina high school students:

1. Deficiencies in basic skills.
2. Lack of adequate guidance and counseling.
3. Insufficient awareness on the part of school administrators, counselors, and teachers of the school dropout problem resulting in, among other things, a failure to make an early identification of potential dropouts; and failure to provide adequate instructional programs to accommodate students who must of necessity hold a job while in school.
4. The attitude of the individual student, his parents and his peers toward school, and



5. An insufficient number of extended school day programs to help the dropouts and the potential dropouts.

IV. Why so many North Carolina high school graduates fail to continue their education beyond the high school level?

According to Dr. Gary Barnes of the University of North Carolina, the percentage of North Carolina students who continue their education beyond high school is approximately two-thirds (2/3) of the national rate. Dr. Barnes concluded that this low "college-going" rate "...occurs, in part, because it is based on the behavior of 18-24 year olds, many of whom are unable to profit from post-secondary schooling because they have dropped out of school." See Statement to the LRC Committee on Public School Dropouts. Dr. Gary T. Barnes, The University of North Carolina, December 5, 1979.

Mr. John T. Henley, President of the North Carolina Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, in his presentation to the Committee on December 5, 1979, points to three problems which are reflected in the "low-going rate" in North Carolina. These, he said, were the education levels of the North Carolina citizens, the income levels of citizens, and a questioning by the society of the practices of established institutions.

The Committee is unable to say definitively why so many high school graduates fail to continue their education beyond high school. It is of the opinion, however, that the high dropout rate in North Carolina does have some relation to the low "college-going" rate among 18-24 year olds.

- V. What Special Factors cause the dropout rate to be especially high in Western Mountain Counties comprising the Eighth Educational District, and what special solutions, if any, exist?

(A) Causes of the high dropout rate in Western North Carolina.

Western North Carolina registers a 10% higher dropout rate than other areas of the State. The factors which cause this disproportionately high rate of dropout are not unlike those in other areas of the State; however, the problem is amplified by the additional factor of geographic isolation. The Asheville City Schools conducted a study which, among other things, involved interviewing 162 dropouts during the summer and fall of 1979 and found that in that area of the State there were about six reasons why students drop out. These were:

- (1) A dislike for school.
- (2) Job conflict
- (3) The need for a babysitter
- (4) Absence and attendance problems
- (5) Continual failure
- (6) Personal Crises

See Drop-Outs - A Problem in Western North Carolina, Audrey Hall, Director of Guidance & Vocational Counselor, A. C. Reynolds High School; Judy Shoaf, Director of Guidance, Charles D. Owen High School; and Venice Lance, Vocational Counselor, Asheville-Buncombe Optional School, presentation to the Committee, December 5, 1979.

It was noted further, that many of the students who drop out were "borderline". That is, they were high enough in ability so that they could not be classified as educably handicapped or mentally retarded; yet they had difficulty achieving on their grade levels. The end result, the study notes, is that these students fall so far behind in elementary grades that they can never catch up.

In Western North Carolina, not unlike other parts of the country, there is tendency by some teachers to select those "who will 'make it'." They devote most of their energies to teaching the selected students, while ignoring the others. This means that many students do not learn because they are not taught.

A problem peculiar to many Western North Carolina counties is the tendency for parents, and indeed, communities, to establish certain patterns which their children follow. The pattern is:

"drop out at age 16, become unemployed and wind up on welfare." The study explained that adults are willing to remain unemployed and use the welfare system to acquire the essentials for a comfortable existence.

In connection with this, the Asheville City Schools Study noted that because the economy of Western North Carolina is largely agrarian, parents tend to feel that there is no necessity for their children to attend school beyond the elementary education level, or beyond the compulsory attendance age.

Another view of the dropout problem in Western North Carolina was presented by Dr. Betty Siegel, Dean of Western Carolina University School of Education and Psychology. Dean Siegel identified several broad areas as "the major input sources into the dropout decision." These sources or factors are:

1. The student
2. The student's family
3. The school and its environment, and
4. The student's peers.

Within each major factor Dean Siegel listed several specific variables. For example, under Student Attributes are listed: attitude toward school, past academic performance particularly in the first three grades; under Family Characteristics: - parent's education level, parental attitude toward school, and the degree of social isolation experienced by the family; under Peer Characteristics: - peer attitude toward school, vocational plans of peer, and the degree of participation in school activities by members of the peer group; and under School Factors are listed: availability and use of counseling, counselor/student ratio, student/teacher ratio, expenditure per student, and the amount of effort made by the school to prevent students from dropping out.

This long list of contributing factors and variables, according to Dean Siegel, can be reduced to two things:

- (1) the degree of identity and importance which is attached to schooling by the student, his family and friends, and

(2) general health.

Any program to reduce the dropout rate must address these two factors particularly the former.

The problems associated with identity and importance attached to school by the student, his family and his friends especially occur in Western North Carolina. As was pointed out above, the highest dropout rates are in the westernmost counties. Dean Siegel offers as an explanation for this the geographic isolation of the western portion of the State. Historically, there has been a greater sense of social isolation in general, and isolation from State organizations in particular within the western North Carolina populous. This notion of "distance from social organization" (in this instance school) is perpetuated from generation to generation. The end result is a lack of identity between the individual and the school which leads to dropping out. See Dean Siegel's memorandum School of Education and Psychology Committee Report on Dropout Factors and Intervention Approaches, December 5, 1979.

(B) Solutions for Western North Carolina dropout problem.

The solution to the dropout problem in Western North Carolina is not a simple one. The factors which contribute to a student's decision to dropout before completing high school are numerous. The educators of Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools have proposed solutions similar to those in Section VI. "What should and can be done to encourage students to remain in high school until they graduate?"

The problem of "geographic isolation" and "isolation from social organization" appear to contribute to the serious dropout problem which exists in the Eighth Educational District. The Committee takes the position that greater efforts should be made to actively involve the students, the parents, and the community at large, in the educational process. No effort should be spared which can facilitate greater communication between parents and school.

VI. What should and can be done to encourage students to remain in high school until they graduate?

Just as there is no single reason or set of reasons why students drop out, there is no single course of action that can be taken to encourage students to remain in school until they graduate. Numerous solutions were presented to the Committee, all aimed at combating the serious dropout problem existing in North Carolina. In general, it can be said that there are courses of action which the school, the home, and the community at large can follow to create a climate which encourages students to remain in school until graduation.

(A) What can be done at school?

1. REDUCTION IN CLASS SIZES

The State Board of Education listed as a number one priority, a reduction of the teacher allotment ratio to 1:26 from 1:30 in grades 4-6. See The Dropout Problem, etc., p. 15. The North Carolina Congress of Parents and Teachers takes the position that improvements "could be made in the school program" if there were smaller classes. The North Carolina Association of Educators suggested that class sizes should be decreased "particularly in junior high school."

2. STAFF DEVELOPMENT TRAINING TO DEVELOP GREATER AWARENESS OF THE DROPOUT PROBLEM.

There is widespread support for providing training for teachers so that they can have a greater awareness of the dropout problem. For example, the Asheville City School study of dropouts urges "Mandatory in-service training for K-3rd grade teachers to help in identifying and becoming more aware of potential dropouts; and a similar training for middle and junior high school teachers." The State Employment and Training Council has made this a matter of top priority.

3. EXPAND THE EXTENDED SCHOOL DAY PROGRAM TO MAKE IT  
STATEWIDE

An overwhelming amount of support has been expressed for expanding the Extended School Day Program. This is a program designed to serve young people sixteen or older who have actually dropped out of traditional school programs, the potential dropout in the 9th grade and youth offenders. The State Board of Education has listed Extended Day Programs among its top priorities for the 1981-82 and 1982-83 school years. The North Carolina Extended School Day Association urges that the Extended School Day programs be made statewide.

The State Employment and Training Council, the Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools, the Guilford County Dropout Assessment Project and others have all expressed strong support for expanding Extended School Day programs.

4. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES.

Providing additional guidance and counseling services for students was by far the most often mentioned to the Committee as one of the steps that schools should take to encourage students to stay in school.

The State Board of Education took the position that "an overall attack on the dropout problem must combine increased basic skills instruction, alternative programs, and improved vocational opportunities with adequate guidance and counseling opportunities." See The Dropout Problem, p.22.

The North Carolina Congress of Parents and Teachers specifically listed among its list of proposals for school improvement "expanded counseling and guidance services" and "more counseling programs."

The North Carolina School Counselors Association notes there is a "need for a well-funded and well-organized pupil personnel team, especially including elementary guidance counselors."

Dean Siegel of Western Carolina University School of Education and Psychology notes among the strategies which could be employed

to help bring about a greater sense of identity with schooling and its importance, "Increased provisions for elementary school guidance and counseling programs directed toward the child who is likely to become a dropout." Dr. Moon in her first recommendation to the Guilford County Dropout Assessment project listed "a need for more counselors, but only as related to special needs and/or career counseling."

5. EXPAND BASIC SKILLS INSTRUCTION FOR LOW ACHIEVING STUDENTS DURING REGULAR AND EXTENDED DAY HOURS IN GRADES 9-12.

The State Board of Education in its budget request listed expansion of basic skills instruction for low achievers as its number three (3) priority item.

Among the list of causes for dropping out "deficiency in basic skills" was prominently mentioned.

6. INSTITUTE IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION PROGRAMS

The Transylvania County Schools presented to the Committee a summary of that system's "Alternative to School Suspension" program which showed, among other things, that in-school suspension as opposed to out-of-school had some success in reducing the number of dropouts in Transylvania County.

Mr. Al Capehart, of the Durham City Schools, cautioned, however, that there is no certainty that "in-school suspension will substantially decrease the number of dropouts". See "In-School Suspension Does Not Equal Dropout Prevention", Al Capehart, presented to the Committee November 12, 1980.

7. EXPANDED EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO EMPHASIZE IN THE SCHOOLS, (a) CAREER AWARENESS AND (b) THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

The N. C. Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and several other organizations and individuals, urged that among the steps that the schools could take, both to prevent dropping out and to help the dropout, was to offer vocational programs and emphasize career awareness .

The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities felt that more and better information should be made available to high school students on the link between graduation and career plans and the requirements of certain occupations for post-secondary study - i.e. technical school or college.

8. PROVIDE BETTER EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN THE EARLY YEARS TO ASSURE EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL DROPOUTS.

The P. T. A. and the Association of School Administrators take the position the major efforts to deal with the dropout problem should be focused on providing better educational services in earlier years - e.g. the kindergarten and the reading program. Having well-trained teachers working with students in these early years will aid in making an early identification of potential dropouts.

9. ESTABLISH "EARLY SCHOOL WITHDRAWAL PREVENTION PROGRAM"

Hope Haven of Raleigh, Inc., in its recommendations to the Committee November 18, 1980, suggested, among other things, that the State Board of Education establish on a statewide basis an "Early School Withdrawal Prevention Program," similar to Hope Haven's "Project Hope". This program involves one-to-one tutorial assistance to potential dropouts. See Hope Haven of Raleigh, Inc., Recommendations on Dropouts Prevention, November 18, 1980.



## 10. INSTITUTE PEER COUNSELING AND PEER HELPER PROGRAMS

Dr. Ron Anderson, Consultant in Elementary Guidance, in his presentation to the Committee, offered the idea of peer counseling as means of combating the dropout problem. Peer counseling is based on the belief that "peer influence can be utilized as a positive force to foster student development." Dr. Anderson noted that several studies have shown how peer programs can significantly impact the dropout problem and some of the problems that lead to students choosing to leave school.

### (B) What Can Be Done at Home?

1. ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO SUPPORT THE SCHOOL AND TO TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN.
2. IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE HOME AND THE SCHOOL BY INITIATING PROGRAMS WHICH PERMIT SCHOOL PERSONNEL TO WORK WITH BOTH THE STUDENTS AND THE PARENTS.

These two proposed solutions summarize the thinking of several persons appearing before the Committee who were of the opinion that parents needed to take a more active role in the education of their children. For example, the P. T. A., through its president, Dr. Melvin Good, said:

"The lack of interested, informed, loving parents is... the most devastating emotional and educational burden a child can carry and it is a problem that will effect the performance of the child for the rest of his life - his social behavior, his work performance and his attitude toward education. In too many cases this lack of parent interest becomes a cycle with disinterest and neglect passed from one generation to another. School dropout becomes a way of life and it is imperative that this vicious cycle be broken."

Dean Siegel suggests that a strategy to bring about a greater sense of identity with schooling and its importance is to

"Develop a closer relationship between parents and the school through home visits by school personnel."

### CONCLUSION

1. North Carolina has a serious dropout problem. During the five school years from 1975-1976 to 1979-1980 about 29,000 (Approximately 8% of the high school population) students dropped out annually.
2. What are the causes of the high dropout rate in North Carolina in grades 8 to 12?

According to various studies and other information presented to the Committee by some North Carolina educators there are several factors which contribute to a student's decision to dropout.

3. The Committee's determination of the primary factors contributing to the dropout problem.

All of the causative factors presented contribute to the dropout problem. To assure that resources are properly utilized the Committee adopts as primary factors:

- (a) deficiencies in basic skills,
  - (b) lack of adequate guidance counselors,
  - (c) insufficient awareness of the dropout problem on the part of administrators, counselors and teachers,
  - (d) the attitude of the individual student, his parents, and his peers toward school; and
  - (e) an insufficient number of extended school day programs to assist the dropout and the potential dropout.
4. Why so many North Carolina high school graduates fail to continue their education beyond the high school level?

The Committee is unable to make a definitive determination of why so many high school graduates fail to continue their education. It is of the opinion, however, that the high dropout rate in North Carolina bears some relation to the low "college going" rate among 18-24 year olds.

5. What special factors cause the dropout rate to be especially high in western mountain counties comprising the Eighth Educational District, and what special solutions, if any, exist?
- (a) The factors which cause the disproportionately high dropout rate in western North Carolina are not unlike the factors which cause students in other areas of the state to dropout. The Committee learned that there are some factors which are peculiar to the Eighth Educational District. Those are:
- i. the tendency for parents and the community to establish a pattern which their children follow. The pattern is "dropout at age 16, become unemployed, and wind up on welfare."
  - ii. since the economy of western North Carolina is largely agrarian, parents tend to feel there is no necessity for their children to attend school beyond the elementary level or beyond the compulsory attendance age.
  - iii. "geographic isolation" - and isolation from social organization. The historically held notion of isolation from society in general and isolation from social organizations in particular, result in a lack of identity between the individual and the school leading to dropping out.
- (b) Solutions for western North Carolina dropout problem.
- In addition to the solutions outlined in Sec. VI., greater efforts should be made to actively involve students, parents, and the community at large, in the educational process.
6. What should and can be done to encourage students to remain in high school until they graduate?
- (a) Schools should:
- i. reduce class sizes
  - ii. provide staff development training for greater awareness of the dropout problem
  - iii. expand the extended school day program to make it statewide.
  - iv. provide additional guidance and counseling services
  - v. expand basic skills instruction for low achievers
  - vi. institute in-school suspension programs.

- vii. emphasize career awareness and the importance of high school graduation
  - viii. provide better educational services early to assure early identification of potential dropouts.
  - ix. establish "early school withdrawal" prevention programs.
  - x. institute peer counseling and peer helper programs
- (b) At Home
- i. parents should be encouraged to support the school and to take an active interest in the education of their children.
  - ii. communication should be improved between home and school by initiating programs which permit school personnel to work with both the students and the parents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. REDUCTION OF CLASS SIZES IN GRADES 4-6

The Committee recommends that, in order to enable instruction to focus on skill development, especially in reading/language arts mathematics, and in order to afford each student more individualized attention, the State Board of Education take the necessary steps to employ additional staff in grades 4-6 in order to achieve a teacher allotment ratio of approximately 1:26.

The Committee further recommends that the 1981 General Assembly appropriate the sum of \$26,787,242 for the 1981-82 school year and the sum of \$27,271,887 for the 1982-83 school year to fund the above recommendation.

### II. REDUCTION OF CLASS SIZES IN THE DAILY TEACHING LOAD IN READING/LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS IN GRADES 7-12.

The Committee recommends that in order to afford students in grades 7-12 more individualized instruction in reading/language arts and mathematics, the State Board of Education take the necessary steps to reduce the class size to approximately 25 students per class and the daily teaching load in these subjects to approximately 125 students per day.

It is further recommended that the 1981 General Assembly appropriate the sum of \$30,190,257 for the 1981-82 school year, and the sum of \$31,077,476 for the 1982-83 school year in order to fund this recommendation.

### III. EXPAND BASIC SKILLS INSTRUCTION FOR LOW ACHIEVING STUDENTS DURING REGULAR AND EXTENDED DAY HOURS FOR GRADES 9-12. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL VOCATIONAL TEACHERS, IN GRADES 7-12, AND INCREASE BY 5% THE REIMBURSEMENT RATE FOR TEACHERS AND FOR EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS.

(a) The Committee recommends that the State Board of Education provide intensive instruction during regular and extended day hours in basic skills for low achievers in grades 9-12, especially those who have scored in the bottom North Carolina quartile of the North Carolina Achievement Test.

It is further recommended that the 1981 General Assembly appropriate the sum of \$19,399,933 for the 1981-82 school year and the sum of \$18,763,466 for the 1982-83 school year to fund the above recommendations.

(b) It is further recommended that the 1981 General Assembly appropriate to the State Board of Education the sum of \$14,651,286 for the 1981-82 school year and the sum of \$31,486,310 for the 1982-83 school year, in order to employ approximately 448 new vocational teachers for the 1981-82 school year and 895 new vocational teachers in the 1982-83 school year in grades 7-12, and to increase by 5% the reimbursement rate for salaries for the teachers and for equipment and materials.

#### IV. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE PERSONNEL AND REDUCE THE COUNSELOR-STUDENT RATIO IN GRADES 9-12.

The Committee recommends that, in order to afford students more effective guidance and counseling particularly in grades 9-12, the 1981 General Assembly appropriate sufficient funds to the State Board of Education to reduce the pupil-instructional support personnel ratio to approximately 1:248, from the present approximately 1:264.

It is the Committee's belief that placing a greater emphasis on guidance and counseling services to high school students will result in a positive impact on the dropout problem.

V. INSTITUTE STAFF DEVELOPMENT TRAINING FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS TO DEVELOP A GREATER AWARENESS OF THE DROPOUT PROBLEM.

1. The Committee recommended in the Interim Report that the State Board of Education develop guidelines for a program of staff development training on the problems of school dropouts, to be undertaken by all local school administrative units. This having been done, this Committee encourages the continuation and expansion of such programs of staff development in all local units.

2. It further encourages that training be conducted by local administrative units for at least two days at the beginning of the school term, prior to the commencement of classes, to all teachers and other staff persons, in order to create a greater awareness of the problems concerning school dropouts.

VI. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSIDER LEGISLATION REQUIRING EVERY CHILD TO HAVE A KINDERGARTEN EXPERIENCE.

The Committee recommends the 1981 General Assembly consider legislation requiring every child to have a kindergarten experience. In making this recommendation, the Committee acknowledges that sufficient time has not yet elapsed to permit a complete assessment of the kindergarten program, (established under Chapter 670 of the 1973 Session Laws) as to its impact on the dropout problem. The Committee is of the opinion, however, that the kindergarten experience will significantly impact upon the dropout problem.

VII. ENCOURAGE GREATER USE OF COMMUNITY BASED ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS WHICH WILL AID IN ALLEVIATING THE DROPOUT PROBLEM.

The Committee recommends that the State Board of Education encourage a greater use of community based alternative programs.

It is the Committee's opinion that programs such as:

- the Learning Opportunities Center of Dare County Board of Education;
- Community Based Alternatives for High Risk Children in Alleghany County;
- Project Hope Early School Withdrawal Prevention Program of Hope Haven of Raleigh, Inc.;
- the "parent educator" programs undertaken by the North Carolina Congress of Parents and Teachers;

and similar community based programs should all be given the greatest possible encouragement.

#### VIII. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND STATE BOARD OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES CONTINUE JOINT PROGRAMS TO HELP DROPOUTS

The Committee recommends that the State Board of Education, the State Board of Community Colleges, and their respective staffs continue their present efforts to jointly plan programs which impact on the dropout problem. These programs include the dual enrollment program, the three tier concept, and others as are appropriate.



APPENDICES



MEMBERS

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Representative Gordon Greenwood  
Cochairman

Senator Dallas L. Alford, Jr.  
Cochairman

Representative Gus N. Economos

Senator Rachel G. Gray

Representative Margaret Tennille

Senator Rowe Motley

Mr. Phillip Timmons

Senator Marvin Ward

Representative Lura S. Tally  
Legislative Research Commission Member



GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 1979  
RATIFIED BILL

CHAPTER 1039

HOUSE BILL 409

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION TO STUDY  
THE PROBLEM OF PUBLIC SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN NORTH CAROLINA.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. The Legislative Research Commission is authorized to study (i) what are the causes of the high dropout rate in North Carolina in grades 8 to 12; (ii) why so many North Carolina high school graduates fail to continue their education beyond the high school level; (iii) what should and can be done to encourage students to remain in high school until they graduate; and (iv) what special factors, if any, have caused the dropout rate to be especially high in the western mountain counties comprising the Eighth Educational District, and what special solutions, if any, exist. The Commission may submit a report to the 1981 Session of the General Assembly.

Sec. 2. This act is effective upon ratification.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified,  
this the 8th day of June, 1979.

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JAMES C. GREEN

James C. Green

President of the Senate

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CARL J. STEWART, JR.

Carl J. Stewart, Jr.

Speaker of the House of Representatives

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SCHOOL DROPOUTS

1979 INTERIM REPORT IN REVIEW

FINDINGS

North Carolina has a significant dropout problem.

Approximately 8% of North Carolina high school pupils (or 29,422) dropped out in 1978-79.

1. On the average more students in rural sections than in urban sections drop out.
2. Primary factors contributing to dropping out are:
  - (a) deficiencies in the basic skills
  - (b) lack of adequate guidance counseling
  - (c) need for more responsive school programs
  - (d) need for improved professional attitudes and skills
3. Students attending public schools in North Carolina score significantly below national average on standardized tests in basic skills; however, grade three is above or at the national norm in all areas tested and also grade six, except in one area.
4. The guidance and counseling services made available to students are inadequate because of the high student-counselor ratio (1:440 in grades 9-12 and 1:2000 in the elementary grades.)
5. There is a need for a more comprehensive and flexible curricula.
  - large number of students respond negatively to traditional curricula because inter alia, no motivation.
- \* 6. There is a need for increased awareness, on the part of school administrators, counselors, and teachers, of the school dropout problem. This increased awareness can be acquired by providing the necessary training to these officials. That is, training which helps the officials to identify factors which contribute to the dropout problem and identify students who possess those characteristics of a dropout or potential dropout.

- \* The wording of No. 6 has been modified at the direction of the Committee. It originally read: "No. 6 There is a need for improving the attitude, the understanding, and the skills of administrators, counselors and teachers towards the dropout problem. - Teachers need to be more aware of the dropout problem."

7. Staff development programs should be created to train teachers concerning problems associated with, and identification of, the potential and the actual dropouts.
  - No university-level programs designed to train teachers to deal with dropout problem.
8. North Carolina public school students begin to fall behind national average at grade four evidenced by standardized test scores.
  - In grades K-3 students score slightly above national average.
  - Primary factor is deficiency in basic skills.
9. Extended School Day Program most effective in retaining potential dropout students and recovering students who have already dropped out.
  - 91 Extended School Day Programs operating in 72 local school administrative units.
  - Retains 60% of dropouts brought back into system.
  - 1000 graduated 1978-79.
10. Guidance Counseling services in public schools are inadequate because of the high counselor-student ratio.
11. Students entering high school have deficiencies in basic skills.
  - More intensive instruction.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. State Board of Education develop guidelines for staff development on the dropout problem, which local school administrative units could carry out.
  - \*2. \$26.8 million appropriated to State Board of Education to reduce teacher allotment ratio to 1:26 in grades 4-6, from 1:30.
- \* The Committee adopted the wording "teacher allotment ratio". The original wording was "teacher-pupil ratio".



- \*3. (a) That the 1981 General Assembly appropriate \$19,399,910 (1981-82) and \$18,763,440 (1982-83) to the State Board of Education to expand basic skills instruction for low achievers in grades 9-12 to aid in the reduction of school dropouts.
- (b) That the 1981 General Assembly appropriate funds to add 447.5 new vocational teachers in 1981-82 and 895 new vocational teachers in 1982-83 in grades 7-12; and provide a 5% increase in the reimbursement rate each year and support for equipment and materials. (The total cost of this vocational education package would be \$14.7 million in 1981-82 and \$31.5 million in 1982-83.)
- \*\*4. 1981 General Assembly appropriate sufficient funds to State Board of Education to reduce pupil-instructional support personnel to 1:248 from 1:264. Emphasis on guidance counselors because they would have a positive impact on the dropout problem.
- \*\*\*5. Support for legislation requiring every child to have a kindergarten experience because there is found to be a correlation between the dropout problem and the lack of a kindergarten experience.
- \*\*\*6. Encourage Community Based Alternative Programs that would aid in alleviating the dropout problem.

\* The recommendations were modified at the direction of the Committee at its meeting October 8, 1980. The original recommendation No. 3 was: "1979 General Assembly (Second Session 1980) appropriate \$3,438,000 to State Board of Education for 84 additional extended school day programs. Make extended school day program available to each local school administrative unit." The committee deleted this recommendation and substituted therefor the recommendation of the State Board of Education as enunciated by Mr. Jerry Beaver, Assistant Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction. Please note also that by adopting the Board's Recommendation, the original Recommendation No. 5 in the Interim Report becomes part (a) of present Recommendation No. 3.

\*\* A motion in Committee by Senator Ward directed that it be determined how much it would cost to implement this recommendation. The Committee considered the State Board of Education's budget request for funding of 5.9 million dollars and 5.8 million dollars each year to reduce the instruction support ratio from 1:264 to 1:200.

\*\*\* Recommendations Nos. 5 and 6 are new. The Committee at its October 8, 1980 meeting passed a motion to include the kindergarten and Community Based Alternative provisions.

PRESENTERS

- Dr. Gary T. Barnes, General Administration, University of North Carolina
- Mr. Jerry Beaver, Deputy Assistant State Superintendent, Department of Public Instruction
- Ms. Martha Beaver, Hope Haven of Raleigh, Inc.
- Mr. David Bennett, Youth Involvement Office, Department of Administration
- Dr. Larry J. Blake, President, Community Colleges
- Mrs. Pat Bullard, Executive Director, N. C. Social Services Association
- Mr. Al Capehart, Durham County Schools
- Mrs. Florence Corpening, Youth Energy Network, Winston-Salem, N. C.
- Mr. Charles Dunn, Child Watch
- Mrs. Kay Foley, Extended School Day Association
- Mr. Kenneth Foster, Assistant Director, Division of Youth Services, Department of Human Resources
- Ms. Judy Gardner, Governor's Advocacy Council on Children and Youth
- Dr. Melvin Good, President, North Carolina PTA
- Dr. Lee Grier, Director, Division of Human Equity, Department of Public Instruction
- Mrs. Audry Hall, Senior Counselor, Reynolds High, Asheville, N. C.
- Mr. John T. Henley, President, N. C. Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
- Mrs. Hilda Highfill, Fiscal Research Division, Legislative Services
- Mr. George Kahdy, Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Services, Department of Public Instruction
- Mrs. Joyce Kinnison, Executive Director, N. C. State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee
- Mrs. Venice Lance, Vocational Counselor, Asheville-Buncombe Optional School, Asheville, N. C.
- Ms. Linda Lindsey, Department of Community Colleges
- Ms. Anne Mackie, National Association of Social Workers, N. C. Chapter
- Mr. R. D. McMillan, General Administration, University of North Carolina
- Mrs. Bruce McSwain, President Elect, N. C. School Counselors Association

Dr. Jerome Melton, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Brenda Moon, Institutional Researcher, Guilford Technical Institute

Mr. Don Morrow, North Carolina Association of Educators

Mr. John S. Niblock, Executive Director, Governor's Advocacy Council  
on Children and Youth

Mr. George O'Hanlon, Office of the State Employment & Training Office

Mrs. Cheryl Posner-Cahill, President, N. C. School Counselors  
Association

Mr. Jay Randall, President, North Carolina Principals/Assistant  
Principals Association

Mr. Raymond Sarbaugh, Executive Director, North Carolina Association  
of School Administrators

Mrs. Judy Shoaf, Director of Guidance, Charles D. Owen High School,  
Swannanoa, N. C.

Dr. Bettie Siegel, Dean, Western Carolina University

Mr. John Speas, North Carolina School Social Services Association

Mrs. Ann Tucker, President, North Carolina Personnel & Guidance  
Association

Ms. E. Carole Tyler, Educational Information Center Program,  
University of North Carolina

Mr. Richard C. Voso, Community Schools Coordinator, Transylvania  
County Schools, Brevard, N. C.

Mrs. Vandetta P. Wagoner, Executive Director, Youth Energy Network,  
Winston-Salem, N. C.

Mr. Steven J. Williams, Chief Juvenile Court Counselor, Wake County

Mr. Ken Wright, Department of Crime Control and Public Safety



