



# California Dropout Research Project

An Affiliated Project of the University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute

UC Santa Barbara | Gevirtz Graduate School of Education

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**California is facing a dropout crisis.** Funding and implementing dropout prevention programs for at-risk students alone, even programs that have been proven to be effective, cannot solve it. Instead, the solution requires a systemic approach based on building the capacity of the key educational institutions in the state—the California Department of Education, districts, and schools—a strategy that will also improve student achievement.

Because the dropout crisis is concentrated within relatively few schools and districts, the state can have an immediate impact by focusing its initial attention on those schools and districts—even in the current, limited budget climate.

The following recommendations are designed to effect change through a combination of pressure and support: (1) pressure to get educators, policymakers, and the public to stay focused on the problem and to seek solutions; and (2) support for educators and educational institutions to build their capacity to address the problem.

### WHAT THE STATE SHOULD DO

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1. Fix the accountability system in order to maintain pressure and to allow sufficient time to address the problem.
2. Collect and report more useful data on dropouts and the state's progress in improving graduation rates.
3. Develop high school reform standards and create “lighthouse” districts to implement them in schools with high dropout rates.
4. Undertake middle school reform modeled on the same strategies used for high school reform.
5. Make strategic investments in other proven dropout prevention strategies, targeting the most disadvantaged students and schools.
6. Re-examine state high school graduation requirements.

### WHAT DISTRICTS SHOULD DO

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1. Mobilize the community to address the dropout problem.
2. Adopt proven strategies to keep students in school and support their successful graduation.
3. Implement these strategies in all targeted schools through a participatory process with clearly-specified benchmarks, timelines, and outcomes.
4. Develop and use data to monitor the implementation of the strategies and to modify the implementation plan.
5. Partner with outside support organizations to identify strategies and to support and monitor implementation.

### WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

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1. Create a personalized learning environment for both students and teachers.
2. Provide academic and social supports for students.
3. Provide rigorous and meaningful instruction.
4. Create connections to the real world.