Join the national conversation!

HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS: WHO'S TO BLAME?

Word Generation - Unit 1.20

Focus Words

convince | enormous | integrity | persistent | reluctant

Weekly Passage

High school dropout rates vary, depending on how they are calculated. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that one in ten high school students will not graduate. Other estimates are as high as 30%. But everyone agrees that the number of high school dropouts is too high. By all accounts, dropout rates for African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are higher than those for Whites or Asians. Rates are also significantly higher in most urban districts – sometimes 80%.

Some think dropping out is not such a big issue, but many believe it's an enormous national problem that has persisted for many years. High school dropouts are more likely to be unemployed or incarcerated. When they do get jobs, dropouts typically have a lower income than graduates and are twice as likely to find themselves in poverty.

What should be done? Some people think that schools need to be made more relevant to students' lives. Others believe that kids are not working hard enough and are giving up too easily. They think today's teens lack integrity and would rather take the easy way out than put in an honest day's work. Some dropouts say school is too boring. Others quit because they do not feel successful. They say the academics standards are too high for everyone to reach. Once students leave school, many are reluctant to return because they think it's too late.

Should schools do more to prevent dropouts? What might convince teens to stay in school?

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Unit 1.20 - High school dropouts: Who's to blame?

Focus Word Chart

Word	Meaning	Forms	Examples of Use	Notes
convince	(v.) – to persuade			
enormous	(adj.) – huge			
integrity	(n.) - honesty; honor			
persistent	(adj.) - continual; relentless			
reluctant	(adj.) – unwilling			

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Unit 1.20 - High school dropouts: Who's to blame?

Problem of the Week

Although many people consider the national dropout rate an **enormous** problem, it can be difficult to get the facts. In some states, there have been **persistent** problems getting schools to accurately report how many students drop out. High dropout rates look bad, and when lots of students are dropping out, some schools are **reluctant** to tell the truth. If some school officials lack the **integrity** to be honest, how can we **convince** them to report the facts?

Option 1: In a school district in Texas, about 13,500 students are enrolled in eighth grade each year. But only 8,000 students graduate from high school each year. Based on these numbers, about what percentage of the district's eighth graders do not complete high school there?

A) about 20%
B) about 35%
C) about 41%
D) about 57%

Option 2: As mentioned in *Option 1* above, about 13,500 students are enrolled in eighth grade in a Texas school district. But only 8,000 students graduate from high school in that district. The school district claims that the official dropout rate is about 10%. Figure out how the district determines this percentage. Then explain how it differs from the way Option 1 is calculated.

Math Discussion Question: The **persistent** dropout problem has **enormous** consequences for America's youth. Students who drop out face low wages and limited opportunities. To solve the dropout problem, we need to have the facts. Most school officials act with honesty and **integrity** when reporting their dropout rates, but some do not. How would you **convince reluctant** officials to be honest about how many students are dropping out?

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Unit 1.20

High school dropouts: Who's to blame?

Debating the Issue

1. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A Schools are to blame for the enormous dropout rate. They are not educating teens effectively to help them face the challenges in their lives.

B Parents and teachers are to blame. They do not persistently hold teens to high enough standards, and sometimes give up on teens too early.

C Teenagers are to blame for the enormous dropout rate. They lack integrity, and are not willing to work hard enough to be successful.

D Social conditions, such as poverty and racism, are to blame for the enormous dropout rate among minorities and students in urban districts. Some students facing these challenges do not have enough extra energy to learn.

E _____

_____

_____

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

I think it's more accurate to say...

That's interesting – can you tell why you think that?

I think the evidence is contrary to what you're saying because. . .

Let me share something from the reading that will help us...

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

_____

_____

_____

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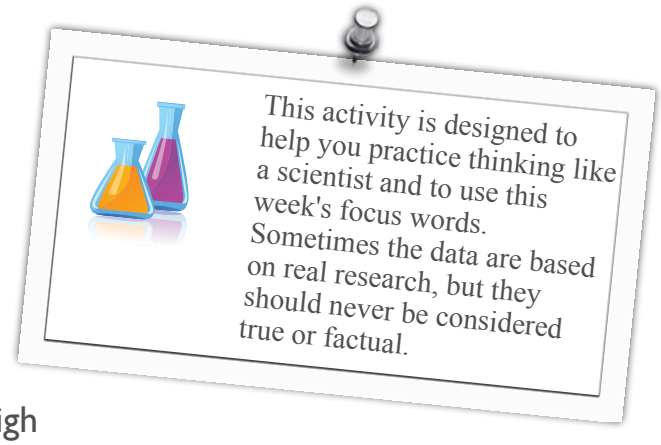
Unit 1.20 - High school dropouts: Who's to blame?

Science Activity



Professors Seemy and Kahn are worried about the high dropout rate at their school. When students drop out, they take an **enormous** risk with their future. Studies have found that getting families involved in schools can help students **persist** in school instead of dropping out. Parents and teachers who work together can teach students traits like **integrity** that will help them succeed in life.

The two professors want to know if getting families involved will really help keep students in school.

Question:

Can family involvement **convince reluctant** students to stay in school?

Hypothesis:

A family friendly classroom will have fewer students drop out.

Materials:

- Ten high-risk classrooms (High-risk students have low grades and **persistent** attendance problems.)

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Procedure:

1. Find ten high-risk classrooms. The classrooms should have similar average grades.
2. In five high-risk classrooms (control group), teach as usual. Identify these classrooms as A, B, C, D and E.
3. In five high-risk classrooms (family friendly), encourage families to come to school and get involved. Identify these classrooms as F, G, H, I and J.
4. Count the number of students who drop out of each class over the next year.

Data:

Control Classes	A	B	C	D	E
	2	1	4	0	3

Family Friendly	F	G	H	I	J
	0	1	2	1	2

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

What evidence supports your conclusion?

How would you make this a better experiment?

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Writing Prompt

What should be done to prevent teens from dropping out of school?

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

convince | enormous | integrity | persistent | reluctant

A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

Good Start

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

Pretty Good

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1–2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1–2 focus words

Exemplary

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1–2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2–5 focus words

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