Once again, the dropout rate for North Carolina public schools hit a record low; and for the first time, two school districts – Hyde and Tyrrell – reported zero dropouts according to the 2013-14 Consolidated Data Report presented to State Board of Education members. Last school year, 2.28 percent of high school students dropped out of school, which represents a 6.9 percent decrease from the previous year’s record low of 2.45 percent.

“This is a day for celebration as North Carolina has seen another record low dropout rate and two school districts report no dropouts,” State Superintendent June Atkinson said. “This could not have been done without the hard work and perseverance of students, educators and parents. Students realize a high school diploma is the first step toward reaching their life goals. I look forward to the day when reporting zero dropouts is the rule and not the exception.”

In considering the annual dropout rate, it is critical to note that this rate is not the same as the four-year cohort graduation rate. The cohort graduation rate follows a group of ninth graders across four years’ time and reports the percentage of these students who graduate four years after they begin high school. North Carolina high schools reported a record-high 83.9 percent four-year cohort graduation rate for the class of 2014. A lower dropout rate typically corresponds with a high graduation rate.

The annual dropout rate illustrates the number and percentage of students who drop out during one year’s time. Some of these students may return to school the following year and complete high school while others may drop out multiple times. The four-year cohort graduation rate is considered a more comprehensive picture of this issue.

The full report containing state, district and charter high school dropout counts and rates for 2013-14 is available online at www.ncpublicschools.org/research/dropout/reports/.
Dropping Out is Going Up in Some Places

Nationally, high school graduation rates are improving. But in a few states, the numbers have taken a hit—including those that educate some of the highest concentrations of poor children of color.

www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/05/where-dropping-out-is-going-up/393398


To see more about North Carolina: EdNC graduation rates by NC district and by demographics see the new interactive map at www.ednc.org/map/2015/03/2013-2014-high-school-graduation-rate-demographics

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Four Takeaways from Jonathan Kozol On Race, Poverty And Corporate Reform in Education

Adapted from learninglab.wbur.org/2015/05/08/4-takeaways-from-jonathan-kozol-on-race-poverty-and-corporate-reform-in-education May 8, 2015

In a wide-ranging conversation about race, poverty and corporate reform in public education, the writer, educator and activist Jonathan Kozol spoke about what he sees as public education’s most pressing challenges.

1. Access to early education is a starting point for school inequality.
   School inequalities along race and class lines begin long before children set foot in kindergarten, Kozol said. Although access to early childhood education is theoretically available to anyone, he noted that there is a large difference between availability and actual recruitment and enrollment. While early childhood education may be available, low-income, predominantly black and Latino families often lack representation in “real, developmental pre-K,” he said.

2. Unequal access to early education has lasting effects.
   Kozol noted that school segregation is illegal now, but cited tracking patterns into prestigious exam schools as a “post-modern version of a dual track system.” The same populations who are not afforded access to early education are not adequately represented in exam schools, he said.

3. A focus on testing pushes schools toward takeover, which can benefit businesses more than students.
   It begins what Kozol termed a “testing mania” — an intense focus on test scores forcing school curricula to increasingly become tightened to reflect test materials. However, if scores are lower in urban centers, where students often haven’t received early education, Kozol said, state officials point the blame at teachers, principals and other school staff. When confronted by continual low scores, officials often turn outside of the district and toward the business and nonprofit community to find a solution, he said.

4. Corporate interests now have a larger role in education policy discussions.
   As more schools are partnered with business-minded organizations, Kozol has seen a shift that he called his “ultimate concern”: Increasingly business CEOs are invited to participate in policy making for public schools, especially schools with black and Latino students. He claimed the aims of school education are no longer cultural, intellectual or community-oriented. Instead, Kozol said, education is used simply to prepare minds for markets.
Wake County looks to Boost High School Graduation Rate

Taken from: www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article21242097.html

The Wake County school system wants to boost the high school graduation rate by doing more to keep students from dropping out and by recruiting those who’ve left to return to earn their diplomas.

School leaders hope to hire a private company to start three “acceleration academies” in August that will help 750 high school dropouts get a second chance to complete their schooling and graduate. The academies are on the fast track because they won’t require district funding to run them.

The district also hopes to start a “blended learning academy,” potentially in 2016, for students who are considering dropping out because the traditional high school setting doesn’t work for them. This academy would need district funding so the opening date is uncertain.

These new efforts come as Wake is working toward the goal of having 95 percent of students graduating high school by 2020. The graduation rate is currently 82.9 percent.

New Websites Sprout at NCDPI

www.ncpublicschools.org/whatsnew

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction launched a number of new websites in May, and we encourage you to visit them to see what’s new.

Cooperative Innovative High School Programs - www.ncpublicschools.org/cihs. Cooperative Innovative High School Programs encourage school districts to partner with their local postsecondary educational institutions. These partnership programs are designed to establish high school programs that target first-generation college students and students who are at risk of dropping out of high school. Accelerated learning opportunities are also offered through these local partnerships.

Career and College Promise - This program allows eligible NC high school students to enroll in college classes at North Carolina community colleges and universities through their high school. Students who successfully complete college courses earn college credit they can take with them after graduation. Students also can earn dual credit - meeting high school graduation requirements with college courses. To learn more about the Career and College Promise Program, please visit www.ncpublicschools.org/ccp.

Book Recommendation:

THE TIME IS NOW: Understanding and Responding to the Black and Latina/o Dropout Crisis in the U.S.
Taken from Harvard Educational Review hep.org/her-home/issues/harvard-educational-review-volume-84-number-3/herbooknote-%281%29/the-time-is-now

Louie F. Rodríguez situates the conditions of the alarming dropout rate in American high schools. While most schools are cognizant of the alarming statistics - about 50 percent of high school students of color are not graduating - Rodríguez argues that teachers and administrators tend to avoid discussing this situation candidly due to fears of personal or internal blame. Drawing from more than 10 years of experience researching the topic of dropouts, and centering his analysis on the importance of school culture, Rodríguez presents the Paradigm to Understand and Examine Dropout and Engagement in Society (PUEDES) approach, an analytical framework for understanding and responding to the dropout crisis. With the PUEDES framework, Rodríguez offers a unique intellectual contribution: a comprehensible theoretical model that not only helps explain the disparities in dropout trends but also provides a set of action steps and recommendations for researchers and practitioners.
National News

Bullying Rate among U.S. Teens has Dropped but Remains a Problem

Adapted from Lyndsey Layton www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/bullying-rate-among-us-teens-has-dropped-but-remains-a-problem/2015/05/15/a34e6508-fa7e-11e4-9030-b4732caefe81_story.html

About one out of every five students in U.S. middle schools and high schools reported that they had been bullied in 2013, the lowest rate since the federal government began collecting data on bullying in 2005. In 2013, 22 percent of students between 12 and 18 said they had been victims of bullying at school during the school year, compared to 28 percent in 2011, according to data by the National Center on Education Statistics, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education.

Federal officials say bullying can take one of three forms:

- Physical — Hurting a person or possessions
- Social — Hurting someone’s reputation or relationships
- Verbal — Saying or writing mean things.

Researchers say students who are victims of bullying are more likely to struggle academically, abuse drugs and alcohol, get depressed and commit suicide. New studies have found that the psychological impact of bullying can last for decades, and that people in middle-age who were victimized as children continue to struggle with depression, anxiety and risks of suicide. The full report can be found at: nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015056.pdf

Highlights include:

- Cyber bullying accounts for about 1/3 of all bullying.
- Second most common place for bullying to occur at school is in a classroom
- 13% of students bullied experience bullying “either daily” or “once or twice a week”
- 6th graders, in 58% of incidents an adult was notified; 9th grade, only 35%
- For females, the main type of bullying is “Spread rumors” 17% vs 9.6% for males

_________________________________________________________________  
Delinquent. Dropout. At-Risk. When Words Become Labels


This article explored the words used to represent at-risk students, the connotations of the words and during what time periods they were most in vogue. The words examined include juvenile delinquent, at-risk youth, dropout, superpredator and opportunity youth. An interesting read!

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Don’t Overlook, as I Did, the Nation’s Largest College Readiness Program

Adapted from: www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/why-i-was-so-dense-about-the-nations-largest-college-readiness-program/2015/05/08/578f1306-f448-11e4-b2f3-af5479e6bddd_story.html

In this article about AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), Jay Mathews confesses he overlooked how successful the program was. He believes the key to Catherine Swanson’s success is the tutoring system she invented. She started with college students as tutors, each one taking up to seven students every Tuesday and Thursday. She soon realized that her students would not be able to handle college material independently if the tutors just showed them how to answer the most difficult questions, as it was usually done. AVID tutors don’t answer questions. They instead ask questions that help students think through the problems themselves. In practice, they do much more than that. They teach each student how to come up with questions for the student whose homework problem they are discussing so that each one develops habits of inquiry vital for academic work.
Summer Initiative: Reducing Summer Learning Loss!

The 2015 Youth Enrichment Zone Summer Initiative is a 5 week program (June 29-July 31 Monday-Friday from 8am-3pm), serving breakfast and lunch each day. The program at D.C. Virgo will serve 60 rising 7th and 8th grade students and the new 9th grade bridge program at New Hanover High School (NHHS) will serve 20 rising 9th grade students. The main objectives of this program are to reduce the summer learning loss and narrow the achievement gap, provide positive social interactions and promote positive healthy relationships, provide increased support to address food insecurity, and to address the mental health and behavioral needs of our scholars during the summer months. The Y.E.Z. Summer Initiative partners with BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) www.experiencebell.org as the academic component while contracting with collaborative non-profit partners to provide classes and services that focus on mental and behavioral health, artistic exploration, woodworking skills, problem solving skills, healthy relationships, financial literacy, STEM, leadership, and service learning.

In addition to using the evidenced based BELL model, the Y.E.Z. Summer Initiative exposes participants to a wide variety of enriching activities and cultural experiences through afternoon outreach enrichment classes and weekly field trips. In conjunction with BELL, this program will provide potentially life changing experiences to participants by taking them on field trips each Friday to introduce them to new activities that are culturally and educationally stimulating. The rising 9th grade participants will engage in weekly job shadowing opportunities through partnerships with a cohort of corporations, businesses, government agencies for the purpose of creating a much greater focus on college preparation and fostering possible career interests. During the final week, the rising 9th grade students will participate in a three-day trip where they will take a tour of NC colleges. If you are interested in volunteering during the Y.E.Z. Summer Initiative or becoming a professional mentor for our 9th grade program, please email jana.jones@nhcs.net.

Please view the video made by BELL Scholars during the 2014 Y.E.Z. Summer Initiative www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8IR8HNkpyA&feature=youtu.be

Laney Students Stop Youth Violence in New Hanover

Laney High School is one of more than 2,000 schools nationwide with a S.A.V.E. (Students Against Violence Everywhere) chapter. Founded in 1989 at a Charlotte high school following the death of a student, S.A.V.E has now expanded to 48 states.

The small but dedicated club at Laney is working to make its school—and the community at large—a safer place through a variety of initiatives, from peer counseling to more high-tech means, such as public service announcement videos about acceptance.

And members say those efforts are needed. Most have seen physical and verbal fights break out, have heard students make disparaging remarks about a peer, know someone who is involved with drugs or the wrong crowd.

“Coming to high school was definitely a change for me because I was always in private schools,” S.A.V.E. president, senior Danielle Voigt said. “I thought high school was like it is in the movies. But I quickly saw what really goes on and what people say to each other. It definitely opened my eyes to a lot of problems students face. And it made me realize everyone is going through something.”

But there are problems that run deeper than the scuffles, pranks and name-calling. Some, like senior and S.A.V.E. secretary Rachel Cox, have dealt with friends involved in domestic abuse and dating violence situations. “I actually know couples who have gone through some difficult times like that, and I guess fortunately they are no longer together. Being in this club and seeing the statistics, it made me think, wow, this really does happen,” Cox noted.

Of all the dangers teens face, S.A.V.E. members agreed, the most subtle, yet damaging and rampant, is social media. “With the new rise of technology, we’re not talking about old-school bullying anymore, where it just used to happen at school. Now, with social media, even when you’re home you’re still receiving it,” Voigt said.

“Social media gives bullies anonymity,” Cox added. “You say things on social media you’d never say to someone’s face.” S.A.V.E. member Keila Mateos said she has seen classmates secretly photograph students in the hallway, then post it on Facebook or Instagram with comments mocking the students’ appearance or behavior. Students also often record fights to post online she said. And that, Mateos believes, makes a more lasting negative impact than the act of bullying itself.

Adapted from Hilary Snow, full story at: portcitydaily.com/2015/04/14/from-the-classroom-to-the-community-laney-student-group-works-to-stop-youth-violence
A Meta-Analysis of Dropout Prevention Outcomes and Strategies

Full Report at: people.clemson.edu/~anlane/meta/temp/index.html

Implications for Policymakers

- **Academic Support**: Policies that provide academic support for students at risk of dropping out.
- **Behavior Intervention**: Policies that identify and address behaviors that predictably lead to dropping out of school.
- **Career Development and Job Training**: Policies that support career and job training as essential component of school and demonstrate the relevance of education.
- **Family Engagement**: Policies that engage and inform parents and families of the performance and behavior of their child(ren)/family member.
- **Health and Wellness**: Policies that support health and wellness in each student to be adequately prepared for school and to fully develop.
- **Literacy Development**: Policies that support literacy development for students to be successful in school and in life.
- **Mentoring**: Policies that support school-based mentoring activities and programs that effectively engage students as mentors and mentees building their academic and social-emotional knowledge and skills.
- **School/Classroom Environment**: Policies that identify, measure and improve the school and classroom environment most conducive to positive student development.
- **Service-Learning**: Policies that support high-quality service-learning that combine classroom instruction with community service.
- **Work-Based Learning**: Policies that support high-quality work-based learning that engage students in career orientation.

Black Girls Should Matter, Too

Full article at: www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/05/black-girls-should-matter-too/392879/

Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended from school than white girls are, compared to black boys, who are suspended three times more often than their white peers are. In interviews, black girls report feeling marginalized in learning environments that they often describe as unsafe and unwelcoming and subjected to sexual harassment and violence. And family responsibilities, like caring for siblings, disproportionately fall on black girls. Societal biases and gender-based obligations often combine to derail their education. Black girls are mostly ignored in policy discussions. This in turn results in leaving the false impression that girls are fine and don’t have a problem.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Pushed to Suspension Alternatives

Adapted from Herbert L. White: www.thecharlottepost.com/news/2015/05/13/local/charlotte-mecklenburg-schools-pushed-to-suspension-alternatives

Education activists want Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to develop alternatives to suspension. ONE Network for Education Charlotte wants the district to commit to the creation of a board of experts to develop “restorative justice” practices at schools with high suspension rates.

African Americans make up 41 percent of CMS’s enrollment but accounted for 77 percent of suspensions during the 2013-14 academic year, according to the N.C. Department of Public Instruction. Black boys accounted for more than 19,000 of CMS’s 24,121 short-term suspensions while their white counterparts accounted for 2,000. District suspensions were down by more than 11,000 from the 2012-13 mark of 35,822 — the largest drop in North Carolina. Suspensions are often a catalyst for dropouts as at-risk students are more likely to be kicked out of class and fall farther behind academically.

CMS Chief of Staff Earnest Winston said the district welcomes ONE Charlotte’s involvement. CMS already works with law enforcement and other agencies to develop intervention programs.“CMS has partnered for two years with Race Matters for Juvenile Justice, which includes the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and other law enforcement agencies, the Council for Children’s Rights, Mecklenburg County, juvenile court judges, the District Attorney’s office, Department of Social Services and Youth and Family Services,” Winston wrote in an email.

“Our partnership has focused on enhancing the CMS Code of Student Conduct handbook, placing greater emphasis on interventions that reduce the need for out-of-school suspensions and creating a diversion program for first-time student arrests.” CMS also works with community groups, Winston said and has taken steps to eliminate cultural bias that could lead to suspensions, especially those of black students.

“All principals, along with our executive staff, school resource officers and members of the Board of Education, will attend Dismantling Racism training by the beginning of the 2015-16 school year,” Winston wrote. “We are piloting a restorative justice program and providing implicit bias training in a high school feeder pattern.” The restorative justice ideal emphasizes treating disruptive students with respect and reintegrating them to the classroom through constructive behavior.
Lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem are common issues for today’s youth. Middle school girls whose bodies are changing and beginning to go through puberty are particularly at a higher risk for low self-esteem and poor body image. Low self-esteem can be related to depression and poor academic achievement, which are both known risk factors for dropping out of school. Communities In Schools (CIS) of Brunswick County identified an opportunity to help. Calie Hodgson, Success Coach for the CIS Action for Success Program at South Brunswick Middle School in Brunswick County, teamed up with Sybil Shipley, a CIS Volunteer, to address this need and implement a six-week series called the Red Bow Club. The sessions, created and organized by Mrs. Shipley, worked with two small groups of seventh and eighth grade girls to promote positive self-image and self-esteem through thought-provoking conversations.

The Red Bow Club, based on the children’s book, The Red Bow by Donna Tyson, is an empowering group for young girls who are looking for a safe place to communicate and be inspired by their peers. On a weekly basis, Mrs. Shipley spent time with the small groups facilitating discussions with the girls about confidence, bullying, personal hygiene, future choices, and ways in which changing their environment can improve educational outcomes and feelings of self-worth.

By building this community of caring, supportive and encouraging students, each week the students were uplifted by the accepting atmosphere. Over the course of the sessions, students opened up about their experiences in school and how they felt they were perceived by peers. Students were asked to describe differences between high and low self-esteem and then evaluate their own level of self-esteem. At the end of the series, all students reported an increase in self-esteem. One seventh grader stated, “The Red Bow Club helped me realize that I like me!” An eighth grade student said, “I feel more confident while walking down the hallway and I have finally figured out how to be me and not just try to fit in.”

While this year’s Red Bow Club series has wrapped up, Mrs. Shipley plans to return to CIS at South Brunswick Middle School next year to help a whole new group of students start their journey of self-discovery.

Red Bow Tie Club Graduates

Important North Carolina Report on Alternatives to Suspension!

From Duke University
law.duke.edu/childedlaw/schooldiscipline/downloads/in stead_of_suspension.pdf

School to Prison Pipeline information has been updated and is available at:
saferschooltaskforce.weebly.com/school-to-prison-pipeline.html

NOTE: Please send any items you would like to see in upcoming newsletters to Janna Robertson. We want to share your news!