# *Don't Quit on Me*
Story Ideas

1) **What is relationship poverty and why does it matter?** Relationship poverty is a lack of access to additional sources of support that can lead to a more promising future. The report provides good background for a deeper dive into the term and what it means for young people today. It may not be a new term, but it is not commonly used and not widely considered in the larger conversation around youth development. This study highlights how, when and why these types of relationships are crucial to helping young people thrive.

2) **Why school suspension is still a big issue for improving graduating rates?** Suspension/expulsion is the leading threat to graduation for young people, according to the report. Being suspended or expelled **more than doubles the odds** that a young person will leave school before graduating. This piece could look into the disparities of school disciplinary policies, school-to-prison pipeline trends and how relationships can buffer the impact of suspension. Youth voices in the report describe how teachers may prioritize punishment over student instruction and guidance, often stretching the rules to eliminate classroom disruption. This piece could highlight why school disciplinary policies still need careful reform and how relationships can help young people get back on track.

3) **What does trust look like to young people, particularly those who are at risk of leaving school?** Based on the surveys and interviews from the report, young people have identified the four factors necessary for building trust in a relationship: investing time, "being there no matter what," empathizing, and offering help without judgment. This piece could focus on youth voices and their descriptions of valuable relationships. Trust is a major component of emotional support, which is one of four types of support that youth say they need. This could be a good piece for counselors, mentors and parents.

4) **What type of support is critical to a young person's academic success?** In the report, four types of support are identified: instrumental, emotional, appraisal and informational. **Emotional** (love and caring) and **instrumental** (actions like providing a bus pass, a meal, a ride, or babysitting) support from parents and adults in school, however, are **most likely to increase** the number of students graduating without interruption. This piece could dive deeper into these two types of support. Why are these types of support key? Which sources best provide this type of support? Where can non-family adults go to provide instrumental support to young people in their community?

5) **Self-control vs. high support?** Social support enables young people to direct their strengths toward educational goals. Young people with **high self-control and high support** are 15 percentage points more likely to graduate without interruption than those with **high self-control and low support** (73.8% vs. 58.4%). In other words, high self-control cannot act alone in keeping a young person enrolled in school. Young people also need support. This story could illustrate that youth who leave school are just as competent and in control as students who stay continuously enrolled, but may be lacking the right support to help combat any life challenges preventing them from remaining engaged. Center for Promise's "Dispelling Stereotypes" research brief may add more context to this point. View brief here: http://www.americaspromise.org/resource/dispelling-stereotypes-young-people-who-leave-school-graduation

6) **What's an adversity cliff and how do we fix it**? Young people reporting **five or more adverse life experiences** hit an "**adversity cliff,**" which is when social support alone does little to increase graduation rates. Relationships still matter, but they must include professional efforts to resolve trauma, health problems, and social and economic barriers. What does the adversity cliff look like within the context of a young person battling challenging circumstances? What solutions can be offered? What are the chances that young people will stay enrolled?

7) **How can schools/communities help provide kids with an anchor and a web of support?** This article could look at examples of school districts and nonprofit orgs/re-engagement centers that are specifically tackling this issue. Where are the success stories? How have these programs improved young people's chances of graduating? We have youth voices and leaders of re-engagement centers available for comment in each of the following cities: Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, St. Paul/Minneapolis, Albuquerque and Portland (OR).
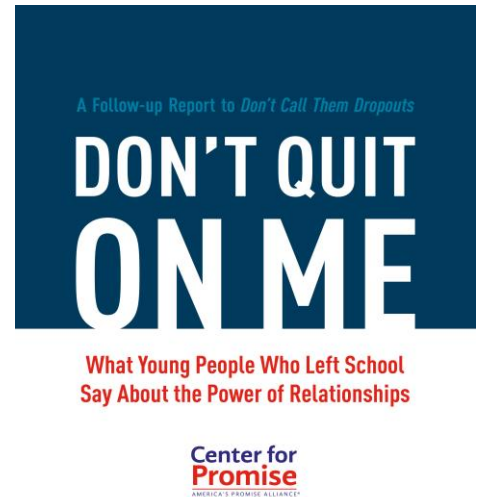
QUESTIONS?

To arrange interviews or discuss any of these story ideas, please contact Daria Hall at dariah@americaspromise.org or 202-657-0621.

You can find the full report, videos and graphics on www.gradnation.org/dontquit as of September 16, 2015. Please join the conversation by using the hashtag #NotDropouts.