



DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR GRANTMAKERS

Don't Quit on Me explores what young people say about how relationships with adults and peers affect their decisions about staying in, leaving and returning to high school. The young people we interviewed and surveyed told us that the strength, number and nature of relationships in their lives are important factors that influence their engagement with school.

The report's findings highlight that young people need a stable and trusting relationship — an “anchor” — coupled with a wider web of supports. What can funders or other investors, in partnership with the communities they support, do to help create the support young people need? This guide suggests some questions you might pose in a grantmakers' forum, among your internal team or with leaders of organizations you fund.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How do the findings in *Don't Quit on Me* reinforce or challenge what you believe about young people who interrupt their high school education? What surprised you? What new questions are you asking yourself as a result?
- How does your current grantmaking or community investment strategy help develop and expand the kinds of supportive relationships young people say they value?
- Which of the seven statistically significant threats to graduation are of greatest relevance to your giving strategy? How could you invest in changing the conditions that lead to these adverse circumstances for young people?
- Which of your grantees or community partners are having the greatest success in addressing the threats to graduation highlighted by the study? How do these organizations invest in developing caring adult relationships?
- What conversations might you initiate with your colleagues or your partners about the report's findings and recommendations?
- How are young people engaged in your planning or decision-making processes? How could input from them inform your investments?

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

- Explore the data in the latest [Building a Grad Nation](#) report, which includes a set of interactive maps and charts.
- Take a look at these three [case studies](#) of collaborative community-wide efforts, including mixed-income housing strategies, wellness initiatives, and cradle-to-career educational support that include the role of supportive relationships.

Seven Threats to Graduation

Students experiencing any of these adverse situations are less likely (statistically speaking) to stay continuously enrolled in school, and more likely to need additional social support.

- Suspension or expulsion
- Giving birth or fathering a child
- Being part of a peer group in which most friends didn't graduate
- Experiencing a major mental health issue, e.g., depression or anxiety
- Not feeling academically prepared for school
- Homelessness
- Moving homes (mobility)

Leaders in community and school settings can make extra efforts to prevent these threats to graduation (e.g., expulsion, homelessness) or to provide tangible resources to help young people handle them.