



DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR POLICYMAKERS

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.

Policy makers have an important role to play in ensuring that all young people have access to the resources and relationships that support graduation. Here are some questions to consider based on the report's findings.

What types of policy changes could help mitigate the seven threats to graduation (at right)?

- Specifically, what can be done to reduce the number of young people excluded from school each year?
- Are students who are suspended given the opportunity to make academic progress while out of school?
- When a young person is homeless or in foster care, what protocols and practices are in place to ensure records are transferred in a timely way? Is the student given an opportunity to understand all of the educational options that are available?

What programs and structures exist to provide support to young people in your city/town/legislative district who are at risk of disenagaging from school?

- What funding is available at the state/county/city level to enable schools to connect young people and their families to a broader array of supports and services?
- What resources are available to help schools connect young people with mental health support? What resources are available to pregnant and parenting teens to help them stay in or return to school? What resources are available to help homeless families?

Within your city/town/legislative district, what programs exist to help young people who are off track reconnect with educational opportunities?

- Do school and district administrators provide a variety of educational options to students that offer multiple pathways to a diploma or credential?
- How do families learn what options are available to young people who are struggling in school or who have interrupted their education?
- How are these programs funded? Is the funding source sustainable from year to year?

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.